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IS ATHEISM OR THEISM THE MORE RATIONAL?

A DISCUSSION

BETWEEN

MR. JOSEPH SYMES

AND

MR. GEORGE ST. CLAIR.



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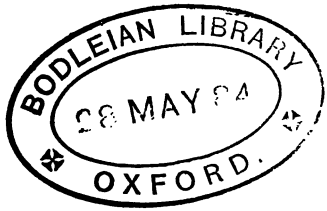
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IS ATHEISM OR THEISM THE MORE RATIONAL?

LETTER I.

From MR. J. SYMES *to* MR. G. ST. CLAIR.

SOME weeks ago, Mr. St. Clair delivered a discourse in Birmingham on "The Folly of Atheism." When informed thereof, I wrote to that gentleman, respectfully inviting him to a public oral debate on the question now at the head of this letter. This he courteously declined, but suggested a written discussion instead. It now falls to my lot to furnish the first of twelve letters, six by each disputant, to appear alternately at intervals of not more than a fortnight. Mr. Bradlaugh deserves our best thanks for so readily opening the columns of the *National Reformer* for this discussion.

Without any "beating about the bush," I shall at once proceed to show why I regard Atheism as being more rational than Theism. Theism is belief in a God, or *deus*, or *theos*. Atheism is the absence of that belief, with the general implication, as I apprehend, that the individual destitute of that belief has done his best to weigh the merits of conflicting theories, to sift the Theistic evidence, and has logically concluded that Theism is irrational.

Atheism requires no *direct evidence*, nor is it susceptible of it. It is arrived at, in the most logical fashion, by a course of destructive criticism applied to the God-theory. This theory, when fairly examined, crumbles to dust, and then evaporates, leaving the investigator without a God and without belief in one.

As I desire this contest to be definite, earnest, and real, I will state my objections to Theism plainly and fairly, so that my opponent may have the best opportunity of refuting them. And let it be borne in mind that to state valid objections to Theism is to put forward equally valid reasons in favor of Atheism. Now, as Theistic arguments usually take two forms, the intellectual and the moral; as

Theism is as much an assertion of or belief in God's moral attributes as in his natural attributes or in his bare existence, I cannot be straying from the subject in discussing the moral aspects of the question. To show that the moral attributes of God are fictions will go very far indeed towards refuting Theism and justifying Atheism. The following questions will cover most of the ground :—

I. Does there exist an infinitely good God?

II. Does there exist an infinite God whose goodness exceeds his evilness?

III. Does there exist an infinitely wise God?

IV. Does there exist an infinite God whose wisdom exceeds his folly?

V. Does there exist a God of absolutely unlimited power?

VI. Does there exist a God whose power exceeds his weakness?

VII. Does there exist a God who is in any sense infinite?

VIII. Does there exist any God at all?

I. The first question, *Does there exist an infinitely good God?* may be dismissed without any discussion; for infinite goodness would render all evil for ever impossible. Infinite goodness could produce nothing less than infinite good. Evil, if existent, must limit goodness; evil does exist; therefore infinite goodness does not.

II. *Does there exist an infinite God whose goodness exceeds his evilness?* I am sorry to have to use so uncouth a word as "evilness," but I have no other that will so well express my meaning.

1. It is generally held among Theists that an Infinite God created all other things. If so, what motive could have prompted the act? That motive could not have been an *exterior* one. From the nature of the hypothesis, it must have been one confined solely to himself, arising from his own unrestrained, uninfluenced desires. In a word, he must have made the universe for his own sake, his own ends, his own pleasure.

Now a being who accomplishes his own pleasure or profit by or through the pleasure or profit of others, and no otherwise, must be pronounced just and benevolent. But he who gains his own ends irrespective of the rights, the profit, and the pleasure of others, is selfish. He who sends others, who are helplessly under his sway, on errands for his

personal advantage alone, and knowing they must suffer excruciating pain and die in the undertaking, is a horrible tyrant.

It is said that an infinite God created the universe, and peopled it with sentient beings. Those sentient beings, in the nature of the case, could not be consulted beforehand: their life, organisation, circumstances of all kinds were decided for them and imposed upon them. And a being more good than evil would have felt himself in honor and justice bound to provide for the happiness of those creatures before giving them life; while a being more evil than good would have consulted his own pleasure chiefly, if not entirely, and have cared little or nothing for the happiness of his creatures. The last clause seeems to me to describe, but partially only, the action of the hypothetical God who is supposed to have created the universe. For pain and misery have been the cruel lot of his creatures from the remotest epoch to which geology carries us back. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Want, disappointment, bitter warfare, pain, and death are the normal condition of the universe as far as it is known. No natural law has been more fully ascertained than this:—Life is an endless strife; and each combatant must must kill or be killed, must eat or be eaten. Another law is, That victor and vanquished succumb to another foe and die, despite their struggle for existence. These laws hold good not merely as regards individuals: races also die out. And if there be purpose and plan in nature it can only be such purpose and plan as uses sentient beings for the pleasure of the creator, who cares no more for their welfare than the worst of slave-owners does for his human chattels.

2. Nay! more. According to the creation hypothesis, every pang endured by the creature must have been foreseen and provided for beforehand. The man who invents an infernal machine, say Thomassen of Bremer Haven notoriety, must be immensely less selfish than the creator of the world. Thomassen had some want to supply, some sort of excuse for his awful deed. But an infinite and eternal being is without excuse; and a being that does wrong without excuse, knowing what he is doing, must be actuated by pure malignity; especially when, as is the case

of all creatures of this hypothetical God, his victims are absolutely helpless:—they cannot resist him, cannot outmanœuvre him, and can get no sort of redress for any wrong they may suffer.

It may perhaps be safely laid down, that he is extremely good, who does good according to his knowledge and power. But he "who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." An infinite God knows everything, and his power is unlimited. Why does he not do good "as he hath opportunity?" The only conceivable reason must be that he is unwilling. He must therefore be extremely evil. When to this is added the fact that he does immeasurable evil to helpless beings, we shall at once perceive that the Theistic object of worship must be totally evil; for even the seeming good he does is done merely to please himself.

Even if the world contained as much good as evil, that would not prove the creator good, for reasons I have given. But the existence of only one evil would legitimately raise the suspicion that he was evil, because a moment's effort on his part would remove that evil and replace it by good. But when we find that evil is *inseparably mixed* with the universe; when we find that during all its ascertainable history, and in every direction, at least as much evil as good has prevailed, we cannot hesitate, except in deference to old prejudices, to pronounce judgment to the effect that the world's creator is the embodiment of selfishness and malignity, and destitute of any discoverable redeeming trait in his character.

It is at present unnecessary to enlarge upon this subject. But if the goodness of the hypothetical creator cannot logically be maintained, and if the extreme contrary can be logically and truthfully propounded, as I contend, the next question to be answered is,

III. *Does there exist an infinitely wise God?* This, too, must be examined and answered by the study of the facts of Nature; and it need not delay us longer than did the question of infinite goodness. If there were infinite wisdom, no such things as fools and folly would exist. These are enormously plentiful; whence come they? Wisdom cannot produce folly; a perfectly wise being could not produce a fool. Some say the great majority of men are fools; certain it is that large numbers are such. Who made them

so? If there be a creator, he makes the philosopher and the dolt, the mathematician and the idiot. No wise father would have an idiot son, if he foresaw its possibility and knew how to prevent it. Yet the great father, as people call their deity, produces idiots by the score and fools by the million. Infinite wisdom, therefore, is no better than a myth, nor more accordant with known facts than the infallibility of the Pope.

Want of space compels me here to break off my argument abruptly, though I hope to resume it in my next.

LETTER II.

From MR. G. ST. CLAIR *to* MR. J. SYMES.

As I expect to find in Mr. Symes an honest and fair opponent, I shall not require a definition of all the terms he uses, but I may point out that if his definition of Atheism is correct, we shall want some other word to set forth the denial of God's existence. Theism is belief in a God; and, according to Mr. Symes, Atheism is simply the absence of that belief, and valid objections to Theism are equally valid reasons in favor of Atheism. I should have thought this more accurately described Agnosticism than Theism; but as I am equally opposed to both, perhaps it will not matter. If the Deity is said by one person to be dead, and by another to be dumb, I confute them both if I prove that he speaks. It is only fair I should allow that one sentence of Mr. Symes's seems to separate the Atheist from the Agnostic—the sentence, namely, which says that the Atheist has logically concluded Theism to be irrational. The Agnostic does not pretend to do that. At the same time the question is here begged, or else the language is a little loose, for, if I am right, no individual can logically conclude that Theism is irrational, but can only come to such a conclusion illogically.

I am prepared to prove the existence of an intelligent Creator of man, and to defend his perfect goodness. I shall not attempt to defend all the positions which Mr. Symes sets out to assault. His eight questions, which he says will cover most of the ground, would no doubt do so, and lead

us into oceans of talk as well. I have no desire to meddle much with the unfathomable and the incomprehensible, and must decline to be drawn into a discussion of the infinite, which I do not understand. Six questions out of Mr. Symes's eight concern the infinite! They were, perhaps, prompted by his idea of what I, as a believer in God, would be likely to assert; for he says, "It is generally held among Theists that an Infinite God created all other things." When he understands that I maintain a humbler thesis, perhaps he will withdraw or modify some of these questions. I maintain that there is an intelligent Creator of Man, against whose perfect goodness nothing can be proved. If man has a Creator, that Creator must be called God; and if there is a God, the evidence of whose action is to be seen in us and about us, then Atheism is irrational. It is a larger question whether God is infinite in all his attributes. It is another question whether God created all things, matter and its properties included. I am certainly not going to maintain that every attribute of God is infinite; for the clue and the key to the mystery of evil are to be found in limitation of power. Like John Stuart Mill, I conceive a limit to Omnipotence, and that enables me to maintain God's perfect goodness. Or rather, I define omnipotence to be the power of effecting all things which are possible, and I show that some things are impossible to any worker, because they involve mathematical or physical contradictions. When, therefore, Mr. Symes advances to show that "the moral attributes of God are fictions," I have an answer for him which some Theists have not.

The first question of the eight is in the form, "Does there exist an infinitely good God?" and in the answer to it there is a semblance of mathematical demonstration. But I venture to think that the word "infinite" leads to a little unconscious conjuring. I shall be satisfied to defend God's *perfect* goodness against all attacks. I will not say whether the goodness is infinite, and what ought to follow then; but I calmly assert that the bare fact that "evil does exist" is no proof that perfect goodness does not. Mr. Symes concludes his demonstration with the Q. E. D. that "therefore infinite goodness does not." I should be glad if he would come out of the unfathomable and tell me what he has to show against perfect goodness. I admit that some evil exists;

but limited evil for a limited time is quite consistent with perfect goodness. It was consistent with goodness in the case of a father I knew, who submitted his child to the operation of tracheotomy in order to save its life. Limited evil for a limited time is forced upon every child who is kept to his lessons; and it argues no want of goodness in the parent, but only a certain intractableness in things, making it impossible to attain desired results except by means and methods which may sometimes be a little unpleasant. I feel myself at liberty to use these human illustrations because I have left out the word "infinite" and am considering the action of a Deity who creates and educates man. The conditions of all work are similar, whether the worker be human or divine.

Space exists, and matter exists. Mr. Symes must allow that they can exist without having been created, because he does not believe in a Creator at all. So far I am inclined to agree with him that space and matter may always have existed. But whether matter has been created or not is of little importance in this discussion, if it be allowed that without matter and space nothing could be made and no processes could go on—that for instance there could be no world like this and no human creatures to complain of its arrangements. In fact there could be no arrangements, if there were nothing to arrange and no space to arrange it in. The Creator is, we may say, bound to have matter—whether created or uncreated—if he is to accomplish anything at all. No blame, therefore, can attach to him on account of the mere existence of matter. All depends upon what use he will make of it. Now the mere existence of matter implies certain properties, such as extension and impenetrability. Further, nothing can be done with matter without moving it, to bring its parts and particles into new positions. But the motion of matter in space is according to the laws of motion, which cannot well be imagined to be different from what they are. Without these laws of motion and properties of matter there could be no universe and no human life, and no printing of this discussion in the pages of the *National Reformer*. At the same time the Worker, using these means and materials, does his work under conditions which preclude certain results as physically impossible, as for instance that there should be

adjacent mountains without a valley; and which sometimes involve concomitant results which may not be wished for, as when a sculptor chisels out a statue but makes a mess of chippings and dust. The end desired is achieved, and more than compensates for the temporary inconvenience. The inconvenience is no accident and no surprise, but is foreseen and deliberately accepted, on account of the good that shall follow.

Seeing that I regard the matter in this way, many things which Mr. Symes has said shoot wide of my position. I am not obliged to consider what motive induced the Deity to create the universe—whether it was an exterior motive or one confined solely to himself. I maintain that he created man. I allow that he must have found his own end in doing it. I do not allow that he has done it regardless of the good of his creatures: else creatures so logical ought all to commit suicide at once. Mr. Symes defines the Creator's obligations to his creatures in a way which ought to prevent most men from marrying and becoming fathers. Because sentient creatures suffer pain and misery, a good Being, he says—even a Being more good than evil—would have refrained from creating them without consulting them. The force or weakness of such an argument depends very much upon the amount of pain and misery compared with enjoyment, and very much upon the question whether pain and misery are to be temporary or permanent. On both points Mr. Symes holds a view which in my estimation is not justified by the facts. He dwells on the struggle for existence—which he describes as a law that each combatant must either kill or be killed, either eat or be eaten—he describes the strife as prevailing from the earliest geologic ages; and he infers that the Creator cares no more for the welfare of his creatures than the worst of slave owners does for his human chattels. But here, in the first place, some illusion is produced by looking down a long vista of pain and death. When we look along a grove the trees seem to touch one another; yet in reality the open spaces are more than the trees. We may, if we choose, look down that vista of the ages and see young life and happiness, and mother's love and joy at every stage. Nor is it the fact that there are no deaths but such as are violent. Nor is it the case that violent deaths occasion much pain and misery. Follow the

life of an individual bird, or dog, or human being, and inquire whether misery or enjoyment preponderates: that is the fair way to judge, and not by bringing all the misery of long ages into a near focus.

And then, as to the permanence of pain, misery, evil, Mr. Symes declares that "evil is inseparably mixed with the universe." This statement he emphasises, and gives no hint that he expects evil to work itself out. I should have thought that, as an Agnostic and an Evolutionist, he would have followed Herbert Spencer in this as well as in other things; and Spencer has a chapter to show that evil must be evanescent. By the law of evolution the human race is progressive—the purpose of nature (the Creator's purpose, as I should say) is being worked out, stage after stage. It is therefore delusive to judge the present condition of the world as though it were intended to be final; it is unfair to judge the past and present without taking into account the drift and tendency of things. In a manufactory we don't judge in that way of the things which are being made, and which we chance to see "in the rough." If evil is evanescent, and the consummation of things is to be glorious, it is not irrational to believe that present pain is like the temporary evil of the sculptor's chippings, the passing irksomeness of the school-boy's discipline, and that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward."

And here, Mr. Editor, I must break off abruptly, like Mr. Symes, having come to the end of the space allotted. Else I could easily double the length of this letter, without departing from the text Mr. Symes has given me: for he does at least *say something*.

LETTER III.

From MR. J. SYMES *to* MR. G. ST. CLAIR.

THE first paragraph of Mr. St. Clair's letter requires no remark; the second may detain us for a few minutes. The infinity of deity, it appears, is given up. That being so, Mr. St. Clair should have clearly defined the term god. The sense he attaches to the word must be exceedingly

different from that which Theists in general attach to it; and, as I am totally at a loss to know what his god is, I can neither accept nor attack his views until he favors me with them. I shall feel obliged if in his next he will define, as clearly as possible, "god," "creator," "created," "intelligent creator." A further favor will be conferred upon me if Mr. St. Clair will give his reasons in detail for believing that man was created by "an intelligent creator," and also his grounds for supposing that creator to possess "perfect goodness." At present he merely declares his belief; I need his evidence.

Why does my opponent call limited power Omnipotence? Is it not equivalent to limited illimitability? or finite infinity?

Mr. St. Clair is prepared to defend the perfect goodness of man's creator. But how can a finite, that is, an *imperfect* being, be perfect in any respect? My former objections to infinite goodness press with equal force against perfect goodness, for perfect and infinite are here the same. Goodness, perfect or imperfect, finite or infinite, must from its very nature prevent or remove evil in the direct ratio of its power or ability. Mr. St. Clair contends that "limited evil for a limited time is quite consistent with perfect goodness." He may as rationally contend that "limited darkness for a limited time is consistent with perfect light." Darkness, however limited, is incompatible with perfect light; so evil, though but for a day, and covering but an area of one square inch, would prove that perfect goodness did not exist. The illustrations used—the case of tracheotomy and the unpleasant processes of education—are both as wide of the mark as possible. They are not cases of perfect goodness resorting to temporary evil, but of imperfect goodness and limited power choosing the less of two evils where it is *impossible to shun both.*

"The conditions of all work are similar, whether the worker be human or divine." This may, for aught I know, be true, for I have no notion of a divine worker. But does Mr. St. Clair mean to say that his god is compelled to choose between two or more evils, just as we are? If so, what necessity urges him? We are driven to labor by hunger, cold, storms, and innumerable pains and diseases. Does god, too, labor for his bread, his clothes, shelter, or

medicine? If not, how are "the conditions of all labor similar, whether the worker be human or divine?" Will Mr. St. Clair explain?

How does my worthy opponent know that evil is limited as to time? Can he assure me that any square foot of the earth's surface is or ever was totally free from evil? How does he know, or why does he assume, that any square foot of the earth's surface ever will be entirely free from evil? That many evils will diminish in process of time, through man's growing wisdom, I cheerfully believe. But, no thanks to deity for that. Man is improving on god's work, and removing evils that ought never to have been in it. Here the consumer has to labor and suffer and spend all his energy rectifying the blunders of the manufacturing deity, or making improvements he never thought of, or else was too idle, or too weak, or too evil, to introduce.

But does any man conceive that all evil will ever be removed? Will the storms be hushed into eternal calm? the earthquake heave its final throb and cease for ever? the volcano spout no more its terrible agents of destruction? disease and death prey no longer upon animals and men?

If these are ever conquered, man must do it, for they are god's agents for destroying men—if god there be. Can Mr. St. Clair name one evil his god ever removed?

Mr. St. Clair *seems* to hold the eternity of matter. Is god also eternal; and if so, how do you ascertain that? I am not just now much concerned to inquire whether the creator found matter ready to his hand, or first made it; but I contend that he who arranges matter as we find it in Nature (not in art) is not good. The tree is known by its fruit. Matter is so arranged as to give pain, produce misery, and death universal! And if so arranged by an intelligent creator, he must therefore be more evil than good. When Mr. St. Clair speaks of the "end desired" in the "chippings and dust" of the sculptor, I can pretty well understand him; but does he know the aim and end of the creator? If not, what is the value of his illustration?

It is of no use to say that creatures "ought to commit suicide," if my contention is correct—ought not to marry, &c. Has not the creator rendered that impossible for most men by passion and an invincible love of life? And is it kind to stretch a poor wretch longer upon the rack of this

rude world by *so* forbidding him to die, though his every breath is one of pain? Goodness never arranged it thus.

I am not concerned with striking the balance between evil and good; I merely contend that goodness cannot originate evil, except unwittingly; that perfect goodness would render all evil impossible. I do not yet see any just cause to retract or soften a single statement in my first letter; and shall therefore proceed now to deal with my questions as far as space will permit.

But *Does there exist an infinite god whose wisdom exceeds his folly?* Wisdom conducts its affairs with reason, prudence, economy, and directs its energies to the attainment of some definite and worthy end. Does any man know the final cause of the universe, the latest and highest end aimed at by the creator? It seems only reasonable that the Theist should know this before he ventures to attribute wisdom to his deity.

I grant that if the "works" of Nature exhibited evidences of wisdom as far as men can observe them, and no cases of evident folly were discoverable, the Theist would have the best of reasons for assuming that all the universe was equally well arranged and conducted. But if the known parts of Nature exhibit folly in its worst conceivable forms, then the only rational view to take is that the universe at large is a blunder, and its creator a blunderer.

It is frequently assumed that a fool is reprehensible for his folly, and that if men are fools, it must be their own fault. But that cannot be the case, for no man makes himself. The creator must take all the responsibility. He who made men made most of them fools; therefore he must be more foolish than wise. And man, be it remembered, is according to Theists the most important part of the creation hereabouts. Man, they say, is the crowning piece of his creator's workmanship; and all else in the solar system is subservient to his welfare. Be it so! But what folly to make all this and then to people the world with fools! Such folly cannot be excelled, even by the lowest of intelligent creatures. And my objections to the wisdom or "intelligence" of deity are equally forceful, whether god be finite or infinite; for I contend that he is far more foolish than wise.

The folly of the hypothetical creator, whatever his

power, is seen everywhere—at least, I know of no spot free from it. Here grow beautiful grass, and herbs, and trees; and human industry turns the region into a paradise, dotted over with towns and villages. The people increase rapidly, and their flocks, and herds, and farm produce keep pace with them. Civilisation in all its branches rises and progresses. There dawns a day when the sun shines in splendor, the breezes gently blow, birds pour out their melody, and man is contented and happy in some degree; but there comes a dismal sound, and a mysterious shaking; and ashes, and stones, and dust shower down in torrents burying all life in a burning tomb. If an "intelligent creator" makes men, why does he thus destroy them? If they need destroying, why did he make them so? Those creatures of his are of all ages from the youngest embryo to the oldest man. Why destroy what is scarcely begun? Why begin what is to be so quickly destroyed?

This "intelligent creator" produces blossoms in spring, and then nips them by senseless frosts; he makes the grain to grow, and then destroys it by wet or a summer storm, or parches it by drought; splendid crops of potatoes to flourish, and then turns them to corruption by the fungus known as "the disease;" the cattle to multiply, only to die by pleuro-pneumonia or foot and mouth disease; a whole human population to flourish for years, only to die by famine and fever. And all this is the constant, every-day conduct of man's "intelligent creator!"

I am deeply interested and anxious to see how my respected opponent will be able to reconcile divine "intelligence" or goodness with the phænomena of the earth.

The next question I have set down for discussion is:

VI. *Does there exist a God whose power exceeds his weakness?* This question, to my surprise, has been answered already by Mr. St. Clair, by implication at least; for he informs us that, "Like John Stuart Mill, he conceives a limit to Omnipotence." That conception, when rendered into plain English, can only mean that Mr. St. Clair's god is of merely finite power; and as finite power can bear no comparison with infinite power, we must conclude that Mr. St. Clair's deity has infinitely greater weakness than strength.

If I were contending merely with Mr. St. Clair, I could

at once pass on to the next question; but I am attacking Theism in its broadest sense; and, with all due respect to my opponent, must decline to narrow the ground to the dimensions of his peculiar Theism, except by easy and logical stages.

I hold the doctrine, that force or power can be measured only by its effects. A force may produce motion in several phases, or it may be expended in resistance, stress, etc. But in every case the effect is exactly equivalent to the cause. An infinite cause could result in nothing short of infinite effect. But infinite effect does not exist; nor can any conceivable sum of finite effects amount to one infinite effect; therefore no infinite cause or infinite power exists.

Now Theists do not pretend to know their god except as a cause—unless I am mistaken. But if no infinite cause exists, their god must be finite. But that which is finite can bear no comparison with the infinite; therefore the power of a finite being, however great, must be immensely less than his weakness.

I will close by asking whether it was good, or wise, or honest for a being of such limited capital, that is, power, etc., to undertake so great a work as the creation and direction of the universe? Though he may be making his own fortune and ensuring his own pleasure, he is doing it by the most reckless expenditure of human and animal life, and by the infliction of unspeakable misery upon helpless beings. A god of honor and mercy, it seems to me, must either have stopped the machine in utter disgust, or else have committed suicide countless ages ago.

LETTER IV.

From MR. G. ST. CLAIR *to* MR. J. SYMES.

SPACE did not permit me to deal with the whole of Mr. Symes' first letter; and now I must let it go, because his second letter gives me text enough for a second reply. In this discussion I should be glad if a respectful tone can be observed in speaking about the Deity. It cannot serve the purpose of my opponent, nor of the Editor, that Theists who begin to read our arguments should throw down the paper

in disgust. Mr. Symes expresses himself "totally at a loss to know what my god is." I shall be grateful if he will oblige me by spelling the word with a capital G, because, for one thing, my God is not the same as Mumbo Jumbo or any little imaginary divinity worshipped by an African tribe. Mr. Symes asks for definitions of "god," "creator," "created," "intelligent creator;" but probably a dictionary will supply his want at the present stage. In my previous letter I told him distinctly enough what I understand the term God to mean: God is the intelligent Creator of man. This is sufficient for our present purpose. To believe in a Creator of man—not a blind force, not an unguided process which has resulted in his coming into existence, but in an intelligent being who made him—this is to be a Theist. And since the evidence of God's operation is to be seen in man's own frame, this theistic belief is rational, and the opposite is irrational. This is what we have to argue about, and I should be glad if my opponent would keep to the subject. If it could be shown that the Creator of man is an *evil* Being, it might be reasonably maintained that he ought to be called a Devil instead of a God; and therefore I have undertaken to rebut all attacks upon his perfect goodness. In my last letter I repelled some objections of this kind, and was enabled to do so successfully, because I did not foolishly contend that the Deity possesses infinite power, adequate to the accomplishment of all manner of impossibilities.

Mr. Symes exclaims, "The infinity of Deity, it appears, is given up." I never maintained it, and therefore I have not given up anything. It seems to be inconvenient to my opponent that I do not maintain it. He declines, he says, "to be narrowed to my Theism; he attacks Theism in its broadest sense." That is to say, he is confident that he could confute other Theists, but he cannot easily confute me. I showed him that his eight propositions about the Infinite, mostly shoot wide of my position; but he thinks it well to return to them, and persists in attacking the impossible compound which he has set up as the God of those who believe in God. No doubt he can do some amount of iconoclastic work here; but what is that to me? If he amuses himself and your readers by wasting half the space at his disposal, perhaps I ought not to complain; but I am

not bound to follow him into this region, and shall only do so when I can spare the time. I will pursue him just a little way now. He considers that a Theist ought to know the final cause of the universe before he ventures to attribute wisdom to the Deity! But surely I may admire the structure of the eye, and perceive it to be well adapted for seeing, without waiting to examine the heart or learn the use of the spleen. I may study and admire the human frame as a whole, and not feel obliged to be dumb concerning it because I have not begun the consideration of the solar system. My opponent wants me to begin at the circumference of the universe, because it has no bounds, and he wishes to see me bewildered and floundering. Yet immediately he himself ventures to judge of the universe as a whole, and pronounces it a blunder, and its creator a blunderer, on the strength of some exhibitions of folly (as he counts them) in its known parts.

One exhibition of folly, he considers, is the creation of fools. Repeating a statement of his former letter, he asserts that most men are fools, and that he who created them so must himself be more foolish than wise. My reply is that, whatever the actual proportion of fools, ignorance comes before knowledge, folly before wisdom, in the natural order of things. The crude and unfashioned material must date earlier than the wrought and finished. The educated man is a production of a more advanced sort than the ignorant and uncultured man; he is the same creature in a later stage of development. But Mr. Symes—whom nothing will satisfy save impossibilities—demands the later before the earlier.

My opponent thinks that infinite goodness is incompatible with the existence of the slightest evil at any time. He imagines that infinite goodness in the creator would prevent any evil outside of him. To my mind this is not so, unless the creator, besides being infinitely good, is also omnipotent, and omnipotent in a sense which enables him to overcome physical and mathematical contradictions and accomplish impossibilities. But, to simplify the discussion, I refrain from contending for infinite goodness, and contend for perfect goodness. My opponent does not see the difference, but conceives that his former objections to infinite goodness press with equal force against perfect goodness. He continues his unconscious legerdemain with the word infinite.

He asks, "How can a finite, that is, an imperfect being, be perfect in any respect?" Amazing! We are to suppose there is no perfect circle conceivable unless it be infinite in its dimensions, and that no man could be perfectly truthful, no child perfectly innocent, no flower perfect in its beauty. The flower must be as large as the universe, it seems, before its beauty can be perfect. The argument against the perfect goodness of Jesus Christ would have to run in the form that his body and soul together were not so big in cubic measure as all the worlds and spaces which make up the το παν, or great all! "Goodness will prevent or remove evil to the extent of its ability." Yes; but since no ability whatever can be sufficient to surmount impossibilities, limited evil may exist for a limited time, and be subservient to greater good (like the inconvenience of scaffolding during the building of a house). Mr. Symes uses what he supposes to be a parallel, that limited darkness is not consistent with perfect light. But this shows some obscurity of thought. Darkness and light are opposites, and so are good and evil; but not goodness and evil. I did not say that limited evil was consistent with perfect good, as an existing condition of things everywhere; I said it was consistent with perfect goodness as an element of character existing in the Deity. With God, in the higher plane of his operations, as with man on a lower, it may be wise and good to "choose the less of two evils where it is impossible to shun both."

"How do I know that evil is limited as to time?" How does Mr. Symes know that it is not? Let him read Herbert Spencer's chapter on the "Evanescence of Evil." Let him ask himself what prospect there is of the eternal duration of a thing which is continually diminishing in amount. He admits that evils are diminishing through man's agency, man's growing wisdom. So they ought some day to end. But he declines to give God the glory. Now the Creator of man is the author of man's wisdom. He employs man as his best instrument to improve the face of the earth and weed out evils from society. To a Theist this is so, of course; the creator of man's body is the author of his spirit and the guide of his course. But with curious blindness to the Theistic position, Mr. Symes seeks to infer that man is wiser than his maker. He reckons disease and all destructive forces as God's agents for evil, but does not reckon physi-

cians, philanthropists and reformers as his agents for good. He fails to see that on the theistic hypothesis the evils which man removes God removes.

Mr. Symes contends that "he who arranged matter as we find it, is not good," because it produces pain and other evils. He would not say this of any human operator. When I saw him the other day at a public meeting, he complained of neuralgia and talked of going to a dentist. I am afraid the dentist would have to arrange matter so as to give temporary pain, and yet the dentist might be good and might do good. It is not the poser which my opponent thinks it is, to ask me whether I equally know the end and aim of the Creator. I'm not going to search for it among the infinities. Looking at the human jaws, and the apparatus of the teeth, in connexion with food and the digestive organs, I think I know the aim and end of the Creator in giving us teeth. It is that we may chew our victuals. And then their occasionally aching is an incidental evil, which may have some bearing on his omnipotence, but does not bear witness against his goodness. Mr. Symes' next paragraph is curiously contradictory. He considers life a torture, every breath pain, death preferable; but does not commit suicide because he has an invincible love of life!

I have agreed with Mr. J. S. Mill that physical "conditions" put some limit to omnipotence as we might otherwise conceive it. Mr. Symes pounces upon this, but does not seize it well. He says, "Here is an admission of finite power, and since finite bears no comparison to infinite we must conclude that Mr. St. Clair's deity has infinitely greater weakness than strength." Does this sound conclusive? I may correspondingly argue as follows,—My God can do *something*, therefore his weakness is not utter inability, not infinite weakness; it is finite, and bears no comparison with the infinite, therefore he has infinitely greater strength than weakness. Why does not Mr. Symes give up dabbling in this ocean of the infinite, which is too deep for both of us, but where, if I choose to follow him, I can make quite as great a show as he of letting down a plumb-line? He wants me to tell him—"Is god eternal, and how do I ascertain it?" What I think on the subject, I'll tell him another time: at present I assert that the human frame had a creator—it is a designed machine, and machines must have

intelligent makers—and I challenge him to show that this, my belief, is irrational.

"Why do I call limited power omnipotence?" If power to do all possible things is not to be called omnipotence we must drop the term. I found the term in use and I used it: but it is not essential to my argument. If Mr. Symes can imagine the ability to do impossible things, he has powers of imagination which transcend mine. I do not expect the Deity to cause two and two to be five, and the whole to be less than one of its quarters; I do not look for him to make squares without angles, and a succession of days without intervening nights. I believe in a Deity who can do all things *not* involving contradictions. Can Mr. Symes show that this belief of mine is irrational? The kind of world which my opponent demands—brand-new and straight off—would involve impossibilities. His cry is for the moon. He wants blossoms which never suffer from frost; he asks for an unbroken succession of good crops; he desires the absence of all liability to disease in man and beast. Can he suggest how a fleshly body, or *any* animal organism *could* be made free from all *liability* to disease? His notion of the universe leaves no room for incidental evils, necessary concomitants, "partial evil, universal good"—in which I find the explanation of many difficulties.

I have only space to assert afresh that the human frame is a machine, the human eye is an instrument; machines and instruments have to be made; the maker of man is God; therefore Theism is true and it is rational to believe it.

LETTER V.

From Mr. J. Symes *to* Mr. G. St. Clair.

I cannot say if it was my fault or the printer's that "God" was spelt with a small g; but I am not anxious to be read by those who would throw down the paper in disgust for such a trifle. I cannot induce Mr. St. Clair to give me a sight of his deity, and therefore do not know what it is he worships. It is not Mumbo Jumbo, nor yet an infinite god; it is "the intelligent creator of man," he informs me. But

no such being exists, as far as I can ascertain; and why should I give a capital G to a myth? My opponent is illogical in demanding honor for his god before he has proved that he has one worthy of honor, especially when all known facts are so strongly against his position. I respect Mr. St. Clair, for I know him; I don't know his god; to give him capital letters might be construed to signify that I both knew and honored him.

"The intelligent creator of man" is no more a description of deity than "the tree that bears oranges" is of the orange tree. I wish to know what the deity *is;* he merely speaks of what he *does.* What was he before creating man? What is he apart from that action altogether? I cannot believe Mr. St. Clair knows, nor do I believe he has any god at all. He can confute and confound me by a real exhibition of his deity in his next letter.

My opponent rather unceremoniously sends me to "a dictionary" for definitions of "God," etc. I go. "GOD, *n.* [Sax., *god;* G., *gott;* D., *god;* Sw. and Dan., *gud;* Goth., *goth* or *guth.*] 1. The Supreme Being; Jehovah; the Eternal and Infinite Spirit, the Creator, and the Sovereign of the Universe," etc. (Webster's Improved Dict.; Glasgow, W. Mackenzie.) What am I to think of Mr. St. Clair's consistency? In both letters he has, almost indignantly and with something akin to sneering, repudiated the "infinity" of god; and yet I find this attribute duly set out in the only definition of his deity which he has as yet condescended so much as to indicate! I must now press him to be candid: Is the definition to which he directed me correct? If so, why does he reject the "infinity" or decline to "maintain" it? If this definition be incorrect, why did he refer me to it?

I will next deal with a few of the fallacies and mistakes of his second letter. 1. Mr. St. Clair is mistaken in assuming that he "successfully repelled" any objections of mine to god's goodness. The strength of my objections lies in the well-known and horrible facts of nature, which cannot be explained away. Goodness, finite or infinite, removes or prevents every evil in its power. Does Mr. St. Clair venture to assert that there is no evil now in the world which his deity could remove if he would? If he cannot remove so much as one of them—say cancer or neuralgia—

why call such a weakling god? If he can and will not, where is his goodness? I demand no "impossibilities" of deity, unless he is extremely weak. If he is not able to do immensely more than I require, he should retire from his post.

2. Mr. St. Clair, in not "maintaining" the infinity of his god, "gives it up"—in the only sense I intended. I have suffered no sort of "inconvenience" from this. Oh dear, no! The only inconvenience I feel in this contest lies in the fact that I have nothing but shadows and uncertainties to contend with, phantoms,

"That flit e'er you can point the place."

Would Mr. St. Clair kindly furnish me with one or two stubborn Theistic facts, if he has them?

3. It is amusing to learn that I waste "half my space" in demolishing the "infinite" god, the very deity my opponent sent me to the dictionary for! I presume that must be his own? 4. "Ignorance comes before knowledge, folly before wisdom." No doubt. And in many millions of cases the ignorance and the folly are never superseded by anything better. Does Mr. St. Clair hold that, "whatever is, is best"? What point has his remark else? A perfectly good and wise god would have permitted no folly, nor have left his creatures ignorant of anything necessary to be known. I expect Mr. St. Clair to contend in his next that folly argues the wisdom, and evil the goodness, of his deity, while inability to remove evils is proof positive of his omnipotence.

5. My opponent jumbles mathematics, morality, and botany in the most edifying manner in his allusion to the circle, the child, and the flower. Geometrical conceptions are not "beings;" they are abstractions. Innocence and beauty may be perfect in a very imperfect and extremely limited sense; is that so with god's goodness? Mr. St. Clair is extremely unfortunate in his analogies. All that he has yet tried are failures. Or else his god is one of very slender means. He is a surgeon performing "tracheotomy," a sculptor chipping stones into shape, a parent "educating" his children, a builder employing "scaffolds," etc. Before he has done, I fear he will rouse my sympathy for this god as the most unfortunate victim of circumstances

that ever lived. The orthodox divinity is certainly superior to this. He never loses his power, and is self-reliant all throughout his career. But Mr. St. Clair's deity is so completely under the control of circumstances, mostly adverse ones, that I expect my opponent to announce next that a memorial of condolence is to be despatched to him, and a subscription opened to replenish his exhausted exchequer. With the old-fashioned Christian god "all things were possible;" with Mr. St. Clair's it seems quite the reverse. No excuse could possibly be urged for any wrong done by the orthodox deity; *nothing but* excuses have yet been urged for this new one. I point out his misdeeds and show up his criminal conduct. But Mr. St. Clair is ever ready with an apology—"Well, yes, but he couldn't help it." And this poor thing must have a capital G! Well, well. He needs one!

6. Unless Mr. St. Clair knows that his god has removed *one* evil, it is irrational to expect him to remove all. If evil and good are compatible at all, and "for a limited time," why not for ever? How long must evil last to be inconsistent with goodness? "Darkness and light are opposites, so are good and evil; but not goodness and evil." Is that "legerdemain" or theology? It cannot be called "confusion of thought," for thought is absent. We were informed in Mr. St. Clair's first that the conditions of all labor were the same. What now does he mean by insinuating that man works on a "lower plane" than god? How is that assumption to be reconciled with the further statement that god works *by* man? God's work is man's work, and man's is god's, if that be so. I shall be delighted to be assured that all evil will be removed. But what are its laws?—laws of origin, progress, and decay? Will death and pain go? Suppose they did go; the crime of their introduction or creation remains.

7. God employs man to "improve the face of the earth and to weed out evils from society." Assertion without evidence. If true, what must be thought of a god that creates evils and nourishes and perpetuates them for indefinite periods, and ultimately uses man as his catspaw to remove them? How horribly they burn their fingers often in the work! What confusion of thought and of moral perception must possess a man who can count the author of all evil good,

and thank him for removing evils by the agency of human suffering. What a monument that deity would have if all the bones of his miserable agents could be collected and reared into one stupendous pyramid—the bones of the swarming millions who have perished horribly in removing divine evils, of the poor blind slaves whipped on by the cruelest taskmaster that ever lived to undo the mischiefs his folly or malice created. What can be the state of mind that supposes the "physician" who does his best to heal sickness to be incited thereto by the author of that sickness—that the philanthropist who shelters, feeds, and clothes the orphan is inspired by the being who murders the parents? When you "gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles," then may the author of evil incite to good deeds. Or must we suppose the deity to be destitute of moral qualities, and engaged in supernal legerdemain, throwing in evils with one hand and removing them by the other, using men as sentient and suffering marionettes in operating his play?

8. A dentist would have no calling if deity had not "scamped" his work. If he inflict more than necessary pain, he is considered cruel. An infinite god, such as I was sent to the dictionary for, could have been under no necessity to inflict any pain. Mr. St. Clair's god seems able enough for mischief, but almost powerless for good—a being that needs endless apologies.

9. If my opponent's deity renders death infinitely desirable as a refuge from his tyranny, and yet blocks the path to it by inspiring an invincible love of life, wherein lies the "contradiction" of my reference to it?

10. I must leave my opponent for the present floundering in the hopeless task of proving that his deity must be infinitely powerful because he can do "*something*." Not I, but he, is the one who "dabbles in the ocean of the infinite."

11. Mr. St. Clair seems to hold that omnipotence is equivalent to the power to do *all possible* things. Is that new? I never heard of its being used to signify the power to do *impossible* things. I thought from his former letter that "omnipotence" with him designated limited power; it now returns to its old condition, and in this letter signifies what is indicated above. I wish Mr. St. Clair would be a little more definite. He now "believes in a deity who can do all things

not involving contradictions." Well, I have asked for no contradictions, the very reverse. This belief of Mr. St. Clair's is highly irrational. You cannot possibly know how many things could be done *not* involving contradictions; nor can you possibly know what power might be necessary to perform them; nor is it possible you should have any reason for believing your deity to possess such power. If that confession of faith is not a "dabbling in an infinite ocean," what is it? It is immensely amusing to see how Theists and semi-Theists talk! Their knowledge and experience is about on a par with ours; yet they profess belief in that into which, in the very nature of the case, they can have no insight. But faith not founded on knowledge must be irrational. Thus I show Mr. St. Clair's creed to be baseless and destitute of reason.

12. Perhaps my opponent will kindly show that a world such as I desire would involve "impossibilities," or that a God such as he believes in could not have made such a one? I do want "blossoms that never suffer from frost;" who does not? I do desire "an unbroken succession of good crops;" will Mr. St. Clair say that he does not? Else why is he pleased at the thought that all evil will ultimately cease? To judge from my opponent's remarks, one might suppose that it were a fault to desire good and not evil. Is it so? I hope it is no sign of depravity to hate evil and to protest against evil-doers, even when they are deities. Does Mr. St. Clair enjoy evil? Would he not remove it all, if he could? He hates evil as I do; but, like a lawyer with an utterly indefensible client, he struggles to show a case where there is none, and tries to defend an incongruous rabble of half-formed and contradictory conceptions, mostly remnants and tatters of old superstitions, loosely and unsymmetrically strung together on verbal threads, and collectively called God. It is pitiable to see a man of his intellect and goodness engaged in hot conflict defending error against truth, and palliating and excusing all evil for the sake of the fancied author of it all.

LETTER VI.

From MR. G. ST. CLAIR *to* MR. J. SYMES.

I REGRET that Mr. Symes should persist in speaking contemptuously of the Deity. The little matter of the little "g" in the name of God, if it was the printer's fault, he now makes his own. He considers he is not called upon to give a capital G to a myth. No, but until he has proved God to be a myth, he must allow the possibility of his existence; and he ought to speak respectfully. In this third letter he uses language about the Deity which renders it painful for me to continue this discussion. It is a smaller matter that he should forget the courtesy due to an opponent, and insinuate a want of candour, as he does by "now pressing me to be candid."

The question we were to discuss is set forth thus: "Is Atheism or Theism the more rational?" As Mr. Symes is a professed Atheist, one would expect him to advance reasons for believing that Atheism is rational, that there is no God, and that the word ought to be spelt with a small g. But it would be a difficult task, and as yet he has not attempted it. He would have to explain how things came to be as they are without any intelligence either originating, guiding, or controlling. His position is, that the eye was not made to see with, the teeth were not made for mastication, the human frame was not made at all. Like Topsy, he "specks it growed!" He knows that steam-engines do not grow, except under the hand and mind of intelligent engineers, but he thinks that human bodies do. He is aware that telescopes and opera glasses have to be fashioned, but he imagines that that more wonderful instrument, the human eye, is a sort of accident. Human intelligence has grown up out of the dust; and there is no other origin for a mother's love or a martyr's self-devotion. There is intelligence in every workshop, and at the head of every successful business in the world, but none presiding over the universe. Out of the fountain head have come greater things than ever were in it. These are a few of the things which Mr.

Symes has to defend and show to be rational. No wonder that he defers the task!

He has not even fairly set about the alternative task of showing Theism to be irrational. I have let him know that I believe in an intelligent creator of man, worthy to be called God because of the greatness of his power and the goodness displayed in his operations. I have explained that by "creator" of man I mean former of man out of pre-existing materials, and author of him as man. I have urged that this belief of mine is rational, because the human frame is a machine—in fact, much more, for it is a complication of machines and instruments—and all machines and instruments at all comparable to the bodily parts and organs have required intelligence to form them. Telescopes are *made*, and *for a purpose;* so must eyes have been: steam-engines are made, and for a purpose, and so is the machine of the human body. This is my rational belief. To deny these things is to deny that similar effects require similar causes to produce them, and is quite irrational. But instead of showing my Theism to be irrational my opponent sets forth a form of Theism which *is* irrational, and, therefore, easy to refute, and picks out some inconsistencies in that. His method may be summarised as follows:—"Theism is belief in an infinite God, a God of infinite power can do all things, a God of infinite goodness would do all good things, but all conceivable good things have not been done, therefore, a God does not exist." But this argument is fallacious: all that follows is that either the power or the goodness of God is less than infinite, and I have shown that we have no right to credit the Deity with a power of effecting impossibilities. Omnipotence must be limited in that sense and to that extent, and we must not expect to see contradictions reconciled. God's goodness I defend, and undertake to show the inconclusiveness of anything which may be urged against it. I do not contend for infinite power in the sense of power to effect impossibilities. I do not deny almightiness if properly defined; though it is not essential to my argument to contend for it, since something less than almightiness may have sufficed for the creation of man.

Mr. Symes does waste ink in trying to commit me to his absurd definition of Deity. The "infinite God" whom he considers that he demolishes is only the image which he

himself had set up and wrongly exhibited as mine. I cannot allow it is mine any the more because he has found one something like it in "Webster's Dictionary." Certainly, when he demanded definitions, I said that a dictionary might serve his purpose at that stage; but I did not say it would serve or satisfy me at all stages. Mr. Symes also amuses me by his awkward gymnastics in the ocean of the infinite. I followed him into the deep just to drive him out; so now he tries to get to shore before me, and shouts out that it is I who am dabbling in the bottomless sea. Seeing that I am leaving the waters, he tries to entice me back again. He protests that he will now be reasonable. He will confess himself confuted and confounded if I will afford him, in my third letter, a real exhibition of my Deity! Very likely; but I really cannot allow myself to make the attempt. Regarding myself as only a creature, inferior to my Creator, I do not presume to comprehend all his greatness, so as to be able to give an exact description, or paint an adequate portrait. I have heard of genii being induced to go into a bottle, and I can imagine a Goliath taking a Tom Thumb in his hand; but I for my part do not profess to have this superiority over God. To define God would be to chalk out his limits. As I decline to contend for a Deity possessing contradictory infinities, my opponent wishes to pin me to the equally foolish alternative of a God with no infinity at all, a very limited marionette figure, such as I might comprehend all round and put forth upon the stage for Mr. Symes to laugh at. If God is not infinite in all senses, I am to *de-scribe* him! But I do not feel shut up to any such dilemma. God is the intelligent Being who consciously and deliberately gave existence to man.

Mr. Symes complains that "intelligent Creator of man" is no description. I have not promised a description, and my argument does not require it. I judge that man had a maker, as I judge that Cologne cathedral had an architect. The architect of that cathedral is not known; his name has not come down to us, and no description could be given that should distinguish him from others; but the cathedral is sufficient evidence that he existed. It is more rational to believe in an architect than to disbelieve. I defend the rationality of believing in God. I am not bound to give an exact description of him. The question "What was he

before creating man?" I am not obliged to answer. I offer Mr. Symes the "stubborn Theistic facts" which he asks for. Human eyes are instruments superior to opera-glasses; opera-glasses are designed for a purpose, and formed only under intelligent direction; therefore nothing less than intelligence will account for the existence of human eyes. The human frame is a machine, including within itself several subordinate machines of engines and levers; repeat the above argument. A mother's affection is intended for the good of her offspring, for the preservation of its life, for securing the succession of generations; and yet this affection is not accounted for by saying it is of human origination; it owes its origin to the author of life, who planned the succession of generations. These are Theistic facts, so stubborn that no Atheist can satisfactorily dispose of them, if I may judge from such attempts as I have seen As I gave my opponent two out of these three facts before, he had no ground for crying out that he has nothing but shadows to contend with.

I define omnipotence to be the power of doing all things not involving contradiction and impossibility. Mr. Symes questions whether this view is new. I am not much concerned about that: it is the view I hold and I challenge him to prove it irrational. He says he never heard of "omnipotence" being used to signify the power to do impossible things. If, then, my view is the only one he has ever heard of, why does he ridicule it and allude to it as semi-theistic? why does he say the orthodox divinity is superior to mine? why does he complain that I give him no sight of the deity I worship? But in truth my opponent himself assumes that omnipotent goodness ought to do impossible things—ought to give us the full-blown flower of creation before the bud, and accomplish grand results without processes involving incidental evil. He wishes me to explain to him how it is that a God, such as I believe in, cannot make such a world as is asked for. I have only to say that no God could do it, because all operations must have a beginning, a process and an end, and no conceivable power, out of Hibernia, can make the end come before the beginning. Will my opponent show me how it is to be done? Will he state a method by which the earth and moon may be allowed to keep their present orbits, and light

remain subject to its present laws, and yet eclipses be rendered impossible? Can he devise a human body that can live and move and yet not be at all composed of flesh subject to wounds? Does he not see that a great and good result may carry some minor undesirable concomitants along with it? Does he think he could show that any of the evils he complains of are not of this sort?

He seems to have great difficulty in grasping the thought that all operations imply a process, take up time, and involve incidental results which are not directly bargained for. They may not be desired, yet may be foreseen and accepted, because they lie in the path by which greater good is to be attained. Mr. Symes says that he points out the misdeeds and shows up the criminal conduct of God, and that when he does so I reply, "Yes, but he couldn't help it." This is my opponent's way of admitting that when he charges the sufferings of mortals upon the Deity, as a Being who could prevent them but will not, I have a reply for him. I show that instead of limiting God's good intent and beneficent action, it is equally a solution of the difficulty if we suppose a limitation of power. Then I show that limitations actually exist, in the ever-present conditions under which operations are performed and ends wrought out. This view of mine, which I reverently maintain, the language of my opponent grossly misrepresents as equivalent to making God "the most unfortunate victim of circumstances that ever lived." It makes him and it leaves him almighty. The alternative would have been to maintain that the power of deity is without limits of any sort—that he can make squares without angles, or diffuse a limited quantity of material through a greater space without spreading it thinner. This might have pleased Mr. Symes, who now parades "the orthodox divinity who never loses his power, the old-fashioned Christian God with whom all things were possible." He never heard of any view of omnipotence different from that which I maintain; but he has heard of this old-fashioned Christian God so different from mine, and thinks such a conception of God preferable. Naturally so, because it is the conception which he feels able to demolish, as it is composed of inconsistent parts.

Mr. Symes, unable to comprehend the temporary use of scaffolding, except for human builders, inquires how long

evil must last to be inconsistent with goodness? Probably as long as the good process which necessitates it as a concomitant is still proceeding, and has not got beyond the stage which requires it. I am surprised it should appear to Mr. Symes's intelligence that the evil which is compatible with goodness for a limited time, may as well be so for ever. A stormy voyage may be endured because of the desirability of migrating to a better country; but surely the storms must be differently regarded if it is known that they are to be perpetual and there is no port to be reached. Mr. Symes forms his impression of the storms while he is sea-sick, and refuses beforehand to find any compensation in reaching the haven of rest. Suppose the storms go, he maintains that "the crime of their introduction or creation remains." He persists in charging all evils upon the Deity as crimes, as though he knew enough of the ultimate issues of things to justify him in saying there has been the least departure from wise and good arrangements. If impossibilities could be effected we might have the fruit before the bud, and ripe apples before sour ones. If Mr. Symes is going to be reasonable he must not ask for such things. He does ask for them when he demands wisdom before ignorance and declares that a good and wise God would not have left his creatures ignorant of anything necessary to be known. And he does ask for them, in my opinion, when he complains against God on account of any evil whatever. He cannot show that whatever is is not best, in the sense of being the best possible at the present stage of the general progress.

As usual I leave much unsaid for want of space.

LETTER VII.

From MR. J. SYMES *to* MR. G. ST. CLAIR.

MR. ST. CLAIR'S third is no stronger in facts or arguments than his two former letters. It would, however, be unkind to grumble, as he cannot present a strong case for Theism, for the very sufficient reason that no such case exists.

He complains of my "language about the deity." Well, in that he shows himself as unreasonable, though not so cruel, as Nebuchadnezzar when he sent the three Hebrews

to the fiery furnace for refusing to worship his image. Mr. St. Clair thinks I should "advance reasons for believing Atheism to be rational." Each of my letters has teemed with such reasons, not one of which has been yet refuted. Has my opponent read what I have written? I have also shown how irrational it is to believe in a good and omnipotent god. The facts of nature proclaim aloud that no good god exists; and there does not exist one fact, or one aggregation of facts, to warrant the belief that an omnipotent god lives. Therefore Mr. St. Clair's belief is irrational. The believers in Mumbo Jumbo, the infallibility of the Pope, transubstantiation, or witchcraft, are not more irrational than a Theist. They all believe, no doubt, sincerely enough, but without any adequate reason.

In my last I expressed the anticipation that my opponent would in his next argue the omnipotence of his deity from his "inability to remove evils." Mr. St. Clair, in the penultimate paragraph of his third letter, obligingly fulfils my prediction by affirming that "a limitation of power" "makes and leaves god almighty."

Mr. St. Clair takes umbrage at my request that he would be "candid." The request arose from that reference to the dictionary and its necessary connexions. I do not yet know whether the dictionary contains a definition he approves. It seems to me—I may be in error—but it seems to me that candor would have set me at rest on that before now.

At length Mr. St. Clair plunges into the Design Argument—the most fallacious and ill founded of all the arguments for divine existence.

1. Adaptation argues an adapter, and an intelligent one. Does it? Water is as well adapted for drowning land animals as it is for marine animals to live in. Fire is beautifully adapted to burn men; falling stones, trees, etc., storms, floods, explosions, fevers, famines, wild beasts, earthquakes, and a thousand other evils are delightfully fitted to kill them. Old age, too, will do it equally well. It cannot be denied that the processes of decay and destruction show as much regularity of action and as perfect adaptation of means to ends as the processes which result in life. Perhaps Mr. St. Clair regards an earthquake, a cancer, or any other destructive agency as a "sort of accident;" he fails to see, probably, how beautifully, cunningly, and maliciously

they are fitted for their work of destruction and misery! Certain skin diseases, tic-doloreux, sciatica, cramps, the stone—how beautifully they are all adapted to the work of inflicting pain! Racks, wheels, stakes, gyves, "boots," thumbscrews, bastinadoes, swords, guns, etc., are all made, and argue or imply makers; but earthquakes, plagues, frost and snow, floods, famines, wild beasts, fevers, small-pox, cancer, and what not, are immensely superior as agents of pain and death, and yet Mr. St. Clair seems to see no design in them, and fails to recognise the existence of a perfectly malignant god, who made them all for his own pleasure! Can perversity of intellect proceed farther? My worthy opponent can readily enough perceive the design and the malice of an infernal machine, and yet fails to recognise the design and the malice of diseases and famines! He recognises the folly or the malice of warriors, murderers, and tyrants who kill or torture a few; and yet cannot admit that there must be an omnipotent god, who cunningly contrives and maliciously sets in motion the grand and perfect machinery of nature to destroy *all living things!* He admits the existence of folly and malice amongst mankind, and yet refuses to admit that far greater folly and malice "preside over the universe!"

Of course, it cannot rationally be contended that god is infinitely foolish and malicious, though he is "perfectly" so. He cannot do "impossibilities," nor things involving "contradiction." He found matter to his hand, and had to work under the "same condition of labor" that men work under; and so, though the universe is not absolutely and infinitely bad, yet it is as bad as the deity could possibly make it. And, further, we are not to argue that because some scraps of good, or seeming good, really do exist, that therefore the good is eternal; for "limited good for a limited time" may be consistent with perfect evil, and the deity is working by various agencies to remove all good from his universe; and then nought but evil will remain for ever!

There is Mr. St. Clair's argument simply reversed.

2. But I must notice in detail the very few natural phænomena my opponent condescends to mention. The eye he instances as a proof of design and beneficent divine workmanship. He says it is superior to opera-glasses. The best eyes, no doubt, are better than opera-glasses. But our best

telescopes and microscopes far transcend the eye as optical instruments. Its qualities are coarse and rudimentary compared with theirs. Eyes! They are beautiful and ugly, of good color and of disagreeable; there are blear eyes, goggle eyes, squint eyes, wall eyes; color-blindness is a defect observed in many thousands. Millions upon millions of eyes never see at all. Were *they* made to see with? Had a beneficent creator made eyes, he would have ensured their good performance. Had he meant them for human advantage, he would have turned out respectable workmanship. I wonder he did not do that for his own credit. What optician could follow his example? All over the civilised world are ophthalmic institutions, where men are constantly engaged patching up, or actually improving, the work of Mr. St. Clair's divine manufacturer, who made eyes of water, jelly and soft fibres, whereas they should have been made of hard and tough material, so that disarrangement and destruction were next to impossible. And these eyes, good, bad, useless, are palmed off upon us by the maker, whether we like them or not. He gives no guarantee for their performance either, as a respectable manufacturer would, nor does he ever repair them when once out of order. There is no sense of honesty, decency or shame in this deity. If he bestows eyes as a duty, they ought all to be good; if out of charity, it is a mockery to give a poor wretch the eyes we often see!

If the eye is a divinely-manufactured article, as Mr. St. Clair says (without attempting to prove it), then the worker knew less of optics than I do, or else carelessly did his work. The eye is not achromatic, and it has too many lenses, the many surfaces of which waste light. It has the defect of astigmatism, which shows that its maker did not know much of mathematical optics. This grand instrument, the crowning work of an almighty god, has two odd curves in the front—that is, in the cornea. Everyone knows that the common run of spectacles have a longer curve horizontally than perpendicularly, and so has the eye! Our best lenses are ground to mathematical correctness, and the same curve prevails all over the same side; but the eye is herein defective. Hence we cannot see, at the distance of clear vision, a horizontal and perpendicular line distinctly at once: one of them is in

focus when the other is out. Had there been a wise and beneficent creator, he would long since have corrected this defect, for opticians pointed it out generations since in their critiques upon the eye. The eye, therefore, if made at all, must be considered as the work of a mere amateur, and of one who worked more for his own amusement than for human welfare.

3. The teeth! First of all, we are born without any; later we "cut" them in misery, convulsions, often at the expense of life. The teeth thus cut are not permanent, after all; in a few years they drop out, or are pushed out by the so-called permanent teeth. And these!—in many cases they begin to decay in a very few years; henceforth the victim of this dishonest tooth-maker is subject to tooth-ache, neuralgia, and dyspepsia. He also has to go to the expense of new teeth, stuffing, etc., if he can afford them. And may I ask my opponent what he would think of a dentist who furnished him with teeth that ached, and and decayed, and tumbled out? What would he say if any dentist treated him half so badly as his deity treats thousands? If eyes and teeth are really manufactured by deity, Mr. St. Clair must refute my criticisms, or admit that his deity is a clumsy or careless worker, and also very dishonest and cruel. These facts must be met and explained before Theism can be shown to be rational.

4. But Mr. St. Clair seems to me virtually to give up all possible right to use the Design Argument by admitting, as he does, the independent existence of matter. If there be a mystery in nature, then the existence of matter is that mystery. And, further, there *must be*, from the nature of the case, as much, at least, as much, if not more, design and adaptation in the very elements of matter as in any living thing. And, further still, I am not aware that anyone has yet drawn the line between living matter and non-living matter, nor have I any reason to suppose such a line possible. All matter is probably *alive*, and always was so, and ever will be so, though in far different degrees.

I affirm, too, that the adaptation between the molecules, or atoms, or whatever the ultimate elements of matter may be called, must be more perfect than between the parts of a man. No man is perfect; nor is his best organ beyond the range of adverse criticism. No man is perfectly adapted to

his environment—at best his adaptation is but a makeshift, a "roughing it," a period of unstable equilibrium, a tight rope dance for dear life, with absolute certainty in every case of a fatal fall by way of *finale*.

Turning from man, look at the ocean. Its waves swell and roar and break a million million times; but its water changes not. Its atoms of hydrogen and oxygen are in perfect equilibrium, in perfect mutual adaptation. So was it when the first water flowed; so will it be for ever. And could that adaptation, so perfect, so absolute, so time-defying, be the result of an accident, or natural result of merely natural forces, as Mr. St. Clair implies? And will he contend that the most perfect adaptations require no adapter, while asserting that the imperfect, evanescent, and miserable adaptations seen in man required for their production an almighty and intelligent god? To do so may be prime theology, but it is not philosophy, nor science, nor reason.

Mr. St. Clair now admits that he cannot define deity. I suspected as much—he has no deity to define. Then why does he contend for what he does not understand? Like the woman of Samaria, he "worships he knows not what." "A mother's affection is intended for the good of her offspring," my opponent informs me. It is impossible that he can know that it is "intended" for anything; that it does effect the good of her offspring, though not invariably, is at once conceded. What *more* does Mr. St. Clair know about it? And what is a mother's hate "intended" for? And this hate "owes its origin to the author of life." Rabbits frequently eat their young; is that also at the instigation of deity? Such arguments as my opponent deals in are not "Theistic facts," as he supposes; they are merely superstitious fictions unworthy the respect of a man like Mr. St. Clair. To talk about deity caring for a mother's offspring is to me simply shocking. Who is it kills children in millions by measles, whooping cough, convulsions, fever, small-pox, by earthquake, flood and famine? If there really does exist a deity, he kills millions of children every century by famine. Has Mr. St. Clair ever reflected on that fact? Why, if a mother's love has any "intention" at all, it is to defend her child as long as possible against the murderous attacks of this very deity,

who meets us at every turn and "seeks to kill us" at every stage of life.

Will Mr. St. Clair give me one proved Theistic fact in his next?

LETTER VIII.

From MR. G. ST. CLAIR *to* MR. J. SYMES.

ROBINSON CRUSOE was puzzled as to his whereabouts in the great ocean, but he was able to explore his little island; and he might have made canoe voyages and gradually extended the area of his knowledge, though hopeless of including all the world. Mankind, in like manner, have mapped the solar system, and delved down to the Silurian rocks with their fossils, and they find their knowledge real and useful, though it brings them no nearer to the beginning of time or the boundaries of space. Our inability to comprehend the Infinite is not a reason for undervaluing the things within our reach. It is foolish to say we explain nothing, because we cannot fully understand the first origin. Things are explained, in a degree which gives the mind some satisfaction, when we trace them back to their causes. The trade winds, for instance, are accounted for by the sun's heat and the earth's rotation: and this explanation is not rendered inaccurate by pointing out that the cause of the earth's rotation is not known, and that the sun's heat itself requires accounting for. I, in my Crusoe fashion, explore, and am obliged to be content with something less than infinite knowledge. I trace some things to man's intelligent action as their cause, and am convinced that certain steam-engines, pumps, microscopes, &c., would not have existed but for his operation. I find other things which I can only explain by ascribing them to an intelligence which is not man's. The worker is not seen, but the work is seen; and I know there must have been an architect of the human frame, as I know there must have been a designer of Cologne cathedral.

The human eye would be enough evidence if I had no other. "Was the eye constructed without skill in optics?" asks that great mathematician, Sir Isaac Newton—"or the

ear without knowledge of sounds?" The argument is a thousand-fold stronger for regarding the human frame as a designed structure taking it as a whole; for the eye stands to the body only as the east window to the cathedral. The teeth are a beautiful apparatus, surpassing human inventions, when we consider their growth, their enamelled protective covering, their office, and their position at the entrance of the alimentary canal, in proximity to the tongue and the sources of saliva. The valves in the blood-vessels are so manifestly placed there with a view of securing the circulation of the blood that Harvey inferred the Creator's intention, and so was guided to his discovery. It is a question which all great investigators ask—"What is the creative *intention* in this *arrangement?*" for they find it a clue to discovery. I must not linger over the human body: let Atheists read Paley, Brougham, and Bell, and some of them will give up their Atheism and take to refuting Mr. Symes's worn-out objections. Every creature is admirably adapted to its mode of life and to the element in which it lives. If we desired to give the body of a fish the best form for moving through the water we should have to fashion it as a *solid of least resistance.* "A very difficult chain of mathematical reasoning, by means of the highest branches of algebra, leads to a knowledge of the curve which, by revolving on its axis, makes a solid of this shape and the curve resembles closely the face or head part of a fish." Let the young reader, perplexed by Mr. Symes's objections, read more of this in Lord Brougham's "Objects, Advantages and Pleasures of Science." The feathers of the wings of birds are found to be placed at the best possible angle for assisting progress by their action on the air. In the Duke of Argyll's "Reign of Law" there is a chapter concerning the admirable mechanism of the bird's wing. A bird is heavier than the air in which it is sustained, and it has to make headway against a resisting atmosphere. Man's poor attempts to make wings usually result in the disaster of Imlac in Dr. Johnson's "Rasselas"; man's attempts to navigate the air by balloons are so poor that the Customs Officers have no fear of being eluded. If we wish to see how material laws can be so bent as to effect a designed purpose we must study the problem of a bird's flight. Leaving birds for insects, how marvellous it is that the

cabbage butterfly should always lay its eggs on the cabbage, the leaves of which are so suited for the nourishment of the young grubs, and will be so much relished! That butterfly has no taste for cabbage leaves itself, and it will not live to see its offspring, yet its instinct—which is not of its own creation—guides it aright. These are samples of Theistic facts, in one department. When Mr. Symes has dealt with them I can furnish more.

In my Crusoe fashion, I discern an intelligence at work which is not my own, nor that of my brother man, which immensely transcends mine and his, though, with my Crusoe limitations, I have not the means of deciding the measure of its greatness. I discern a worker, whether infinite or not—a worker operating under conditions, whether the conditions be self-imposed or not. He accomplishes many things which I can appreciate; He seems to be working out greater purposes which I do but dimly grasp.

As an evolutionist I discern something of a purpose running through the ages, independent of the will of kings and legislators. I perceive a gradual advance to higher platforms of life, at present culminating in man. Man did not come until the earth had been prepared for him, and stores of coal and iron laid up for his use. Apparently he could not come without lower creatures preceding him; because he had to be born from them. As a race, we have had to go through our schooling, for in no other way could we become educated; our struggle with difficulty makes men of us, unless we neutralise it by taking the discipline sulkily. Had the Creator been perpetually at our elbow to do our lessons for us, to work for us while we slept, and to help us over all stiles, we should never have attained intellectual manhood and moral strength. Man is progressing still, and therefore will be a nobler creature by and bye. His surroundings are subject to an evolution and improvement, which advances *pari passu* with himself. He himself is the Creator's latest-fashioned and best-adapted instrument for effecting these desirable adaptations, commissioned to carry on and carry out some of the highest purposes of God. It is a great thing to be conscious of this; and I am bold to say that thousands of good people are conscious of communion with a Higher Soul, of inspirations received from him, and of tasks assigned by him, the accomplish-

ment of which is another phrase for co-operation with him and doing his will on earth.

This Divine Worker seems to be limited by "the conditions of all work." As regards ourselves and our own work, we cannot conceive how we could live at all in a dreamy, shifting, chance world, not subject to fixed conditions. We are finite and conditioned, and cannot realise an utterly different kind of existence. It would follow from this alone that anything which the Creater may do with us or for us must be conformable to the conditions of the world *we* live in if it is to be comprehensible to us. Although, therefore, He be great beyond all assignable limits, he must necessarily look limited to us. Where we see him operating we see him making use of natural forces, moulding and directing them. The natural forces in themselves are neither moral nor immoral—steam, electricity, and strychnine have no conscience, and are not to be blamed or praised for their effects. They may be turned to good uses or to bad uses—strychnine to poison or to relieve, steam to work a locomotive or propel a murderous bullet. We infer a worker and his moral character from the use made of natural forces. Mr. Symes does not distinguish between forces working blindly and forces working under intelligent direction, but insists on ascribing *all* results to God, or else none. This is not what I discern, for I perceive that some things have been contrived by some Intelligence, and of other things I do not perceive it.

An enlightened evolutionist ought to know that "Evil" is "Good in the making." It has been so in the past, again and again. Perfect goodness is producing more and more good constantly (evil, as Spencer shows, is evanescent) and may probably produce infinite good in the course of time. But Mr. Symes is not content to have it *produced*, he wants his bread before the cake is baked.

Mr. Symes finishes his last by asking "Will I give him one proved Theistic fact?" Well, something depends upon what is allowed to be "proof," and that again depends upon whether you have to convince a man of common sense or a man of uncommon obstinacy. If folk possess eyes it is no guarantee that light will reach their minds, if they choose to live in a *camera obscura*. My opponent closes the shutters and then complains that things are dark. What can I do

with a man who does not believe that eyes are given him to see with? On the same principle his faculties are not given him to enable him either to reason correctly or to understand arguments. Perhaps I ought not to be surprised that my proofs are thrown away upon him.

I have noticed in going through a cut-glass manufactory that although the workmen are skilful and the processes are ingenious by which the crude "metal" is blown, annealed, ground on wheels of iron for the pattern, and on wheels of stone and wood for smoothing and polishing—I have noticed that accidents are liable to occur at every stage, and some few cruets, wine-glasses, decanters, etc., get broken and thrown into the waste-tub. But if I want to see what is being produced, and was designed before it was manufactured, I go not to the waste-tub, but to the show-room. Certainly even a fractured salt-cellar in the waste-tub would show design—a *formative* design accidently baulked, not a design to produce fracture and waste—but a wise man will rather go to the show-room. Mr. Symes, I imagine, would go to the waste-tub and refuse to see anything outside of it. He invites us to contemplate blind eyes, rotten teeth and people suffering from cancer. He assures us that had a beneficent Creator made our eyes He would have ensured their good performance. I should reply that He does so. "Not in all cases," says my querulous friend, "why I find squinting eyes and blind eyes, and here are ophthalmic institutions!" True, man's heart of pity leads him to heal. Man's intelligence enables him to understand something of optics. In both respects he is growing up in the ways of his Heavenly Father. The modest Newton admired the Divine skill in optics: but Mr. Symes claims to "know more of optics himself," and to be able to teach the Creator his business. The eye "ought to have been made not of water, jelly, and soft fibres, but of hard and tough material." Surely Alphonso of Castile has come back again. That monarch said that had he been of the privy council of the Deity he could have advised the formation of the solar system on a better plan! Had he said this concerning the actual solar system instead of against the false system of Ptolemy, it would have been irreverent, not to say blasphemous. I count it rather inconsistent in Mr. Symes to want any eyes at all, as he thinks they were not made to see with

and are an endless bother. Perhaps the hard and tough ones which he would substitute would be faulty in their refraction (for all work is conditioned by the material). Can my opponent assure me that it would not be so? Has he got any of these eyes ready-made, and do they answer perfectly? or is this an empty boast of his about improving upon the Creator's work? I doubt not that there is a good reason for employing soft humors and delicate fibres in the eye, and then I admire the care and wisdom which have provided so well for the protection of such a delicate organ, by the position given to it, in a bony socket defended by lids and lashes and ramparts. "But the eye lacks achromatism, and has the defect of astigmatism, and follows the pattern of inferior spectacle-glasses in having two curves in the cornea." Rather random assertions these: take for instance the first. Chromatism is color-ism; a double convex lens or magnifying glass causes objects to appear with rainbow-colored fringes. This was a defect for a long time in telescopes, and telescopes free from the defect are called achromatic. Well, are we troubled and inconvenienced by seeing these colored fringes when we use the naked eye? Is any reader conscious of it? Now what is the fact? All telescopes were defective in this particular, and Sir I. Newton had said that there could be no remedy, until it occurred to an ingenious optician that the difficulty must have been overcome by the Maker of the eye. So he examined the eye till he discovered *how* it was overcome, and then by imitation of the Creator's method invented the first achromatic telescope. I would call my opponent's attention to this, but I suppose it is of no use; he will persist in regarding the eyes as clumsy workmanship and in complaining that they are palmed off upon us whether we like it or not. The traveller Vambèry mentions that in Bokhara they punish slaves by gouging out their eyes. Mr. Symes, to be consistent, ought not to protest against the cruelty, since in his estimation it involves no loss, and the chief cruelty is in having the eyes thrust upon us. But in answer to his astounding assertion that the eye is not respectable workmanship and that the best telescopes far transcend it as optical instruments, it is sufficient to say that we can see with our eyes, unaided by telescopes, whereas we cannot see with telescopes unaided by eyes.

My opponent not only damns his eyes, but curses his teeth. First because he is born without them! On his theory this ought to be an advantage, so far as it goes. But, considering that other beautiful provision of the beneficent Creator, which supplies a fountain of milk for the infant lips to draw from, teeth are not only not required for a milk diet, but would be inconvenient to the mother. Then Mr. Symes cries out, "We cut them in misery!" He is always afraid of a little pain. "The first set are not permanent." No, because the child will grow, the jaws will lengthen, and there will be room enough for larger teeth, and for thirty-two instead of twenty. Mr. Symes, as a child, had less jaw; which reminds me, however, of a pun made by John Hunter, the famous surgeon. While he was once lecturing, and pointing out that in the higher animals the jaw is shorter, while the intelligence, of course, is greater, his pupils were chattering nonsense to one another. "Gentlemen," said Hunter, "let us have more intellect and less jaw!" I don't know whether those young men had attained their wisdom-teeth. Mr. Symes is annoyed that even the second set of teeth are subject to neuralgia and decay. This he considers a great Atheistic fact. The evil apparatus of the teeth is thrust upon us in the same cruel manner as our clumsily-made eyes, and we may any day have an attack of neuralgia. At length, however, the teeth decay and leave us, and then what do we do? Why, it appears, we have to go to the expense of a new set, so essential are they, and this is made an additional subject of complaint! By the bye, I suppose I must not pass over the question put—what should I say if a dentist supplied me with teeth that ached? I should say that he was cleverer than any other dentist I had met with, for the aching was proof that he had connected the teeth with nerves, and made them live. I should say I was glad to have *living* teeth in my mouth, instead of dead ivory, and that I was satisfied the teeth were contrived for me to eat with, while their very occasional aching was only an unpleasant incident, and perhaps brought on by my own folly. Careful people will not often catch cold in the face, and good, moral people will not so devote themselves to Venus and mercury that their teeth fall out.

Let us come to adaptations. Of course I am not going

to be pinned to any definition which makes adaptation the same thing as design. Some adaptations may not be designed. There's a distinction to be drawn between mere fitness to produce a result, and purposive fitness which intends to secure the result. But Mr. Symes as usual does not perceive distinctions which make all the difference. He says that water is adapted for drowning and fire for burning. Granted: but are they purposely adapted, deliberately designed and fitted? This is the very essence of the question. When the jeweller's boy drops a watch, gravity and "the law of falling bodies" are adapted to smash it; but that is an accidental adaptation, not to be compared with the adaptation of part to part in the construction of the watch —not to be compared with it, but rather contrasted. Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall, and the egg thus smashed could not say that gravity was unadapted to produce the result; but compare this with the purposive adaptation of an egg, as I will now epitomise it from Professor Owen's lecture on "Design." An egg is made convex and dome-like, to bear the weight of the sitting bird. It contains a whitish spot, which is the germ, in which the development of the chick begins. The germ is on one side of the yolk, quite near to the shell, for it is necessary that it should be brought as close as possible to the hot brooding skin of the sitting hen. Now it is a fact that though you take as many eggs as you please, and turn them about as often as you like, you will always find this opaque white spot at the middle of the uppermost surface of the yolk. Hunter compared this phænomenon to the movements of the needle to the pole. Of course there is an apparatus which secures this result; but it *is* an apparatus, a piece of machinery. "As the vital fire burns up, organic material is reduced to carbon; a membrane, over which the blood spreads in a net-work of minute vessels, like a gill or lung, then extends from the embryo to the inner side of the shell, between it and the white; the shell is made porous to allow the air access to this temporary respiratory organ; and the oxygen combining with the carbon, it exhales as carbonic acid. As the chick approaches the period of its extrication, it is able to breathe by its proper lungs, and in the *vesica aëris*, or collection of air at the great end of the egg, it finds the wherewithal to begin its feeble inspirations, and to utter the

low chirp which may be heard just before it chips the shell. And how does it effect this? By means of a hard knob specially formed upon the end of the upper beak, and which, after it has done its work, disappears." All this appears to me something very different from the adaptedness of the hard ground to break the egg if it falls; but Mr. Symes would have us believe that the adaptation is of the same sort! His words are, "It cannot be denied that the processes of decay and destruction show as perfect adaptation of means to ends as processes which result in life."

He argues that if anything is designed, earthquakes, plagues, cancer, etc., are designed to cause pain, and must be regarded as proving a malignant God. But can he show that the fitness or adaptation in these agencies is purposive? I can see design in an infernal machine; oh yes! but I am not convinced that earthquakes are an infernal arrangement, much less that teeth are a diabolical invention because they sometimes ache. The adaptedness of the teeth for mastication bears the appearance of a good purpose; the adaptedness of an earthquake to rock down houses is not clearly purposive at all. There are influences of destruction and of decay, I admit; but the constructive operations are what I see design in. If I don't attribute the former to God, my opponent must not object, since he does not either.

I have a word to say which must be fatal to this idea that the forces of decay and destruction are purposive, if any are, and prove a malignant deity. A malignant deity finding pleasure in destruction, would soon destroy everything. But, in fact, the agencies which build up are stronger than the agencies which destroy; construction gains upon decay, good gains upon evil. For evil is evanescent as Herbert Spencer shows, in a chapter which Mr. Symes will not deal with. Even if destruction had to be ascribed to a destroying deity, construction would have to be ascribed to a deity engaged in building up. Then, as the same being would hardly build up with one hand and destroy with the other, Mr. Symes would be landed in Dualism, or the old Persian belief in two Gods. The further fact that construction is gaining upon decay, good gaining upon evil, would force him to admit that the good deity was the stronger. The way out of this difficulty is only to be found

in Theism as I advocate it—one God, operating under conditions. One proof and test of this Theism consists in the fact that evil and decay do not carry purpose on the face of them, while organised adaptations do.

If the reader grasps this fact he will see through my opponent's curious attempt to turn my argument round and make it appear equally good for proving the existence of a malignant deity. He suggests such a being, "laboring under conditions" which prevent infinite evil from being effected at once, but "working by various agencies to remove all good from his universe." He does not seem to see that this implies a universe of "good" to begin with, and that this is another form of his irrational demand that the finished thing should exist before the crude and unwrought, the perfect work before there has been time for its elaboration. He wants his cake before it is baked, before the flour is kneaded, before the wheat is grown.

LETTER IX.

From MR. J. SYMES *to* MR. G. ST. CLAIR.

MR. ST. CLAIR says he "knows" there must have been an "architect of the human frame," as he knows there must have been "a designer of Cologne Cathedral." Well, then, the human frame must be an architectural production, or building. Of what Order, of what Style is it? I never saw it described in any book on Architecture: how is that? So baseless is my opponent's Theism that he confounds language in order to support it. If he will prove that man's frame is an architectural structure, I will prove Cologne Cathedral to be a mushroom, of an edible sort, too.

Mr. St. Clair having no case, no real god, no facts to support his superstition, cherishing a blind belief in an impossibility, resorts to the unconscious legerdemain of deceiving himself and his readers by the use of poetical and mythical language, in which the distinction between natural objects and human manufactures is ignored, and a potato is dubbed a building and a building designated a turnip. This is what the "Design argument" resolves itself into; and under its witchery, men, not otherwise unfair or

illogical, run through fantastic mazes of bewilderment, vainly persuading themselves that they are reasoning, when they are only floundering in "Serbonian bogs," following the Theistic will-o'-the-wisp, manifestly benighted and lost, and yet assuring you with the utmost gravity that they and they alone are perfectly self-possessed and well know their whereabouts, and whither they are tending.

With Mr. St. Clair, teeth are yet a beautiful apparatus designed and intended for mastication. Has he never reflected that nutrition is totally independent of mastication and teeth in countless millions of beings? The child lives without teeth, so does many an old man; sheep and cows have no front teeth in the upper jaw; the whale, the dugong, the ornithorhynchus, ant-eaters, and all birds are destitute of teeth. If presence of teeth argues design, what does their absence argue? If god gives a man teeth to eat with, I presume he means him to cease eating when he destroys them. Instead of that, my opponent and other irreverent and disobedient Theists, either misunderstanding or disregarding the divine intimation, rush away to the dentist and get other teeth wherewith to obstruct the divine intentions! Will he explain his conduct?

Of course, I admit that nature can in some departments immensely exceed man, but that does not prove any existence *above* nature. The valves of the blood-vessels are manifestly placed there to secure the circulation of the blood, says my opponent. He might as well affirm that a river-bed is manifestly placed where it is to secure the flow of the river that way. Which existed first, rivers or river-beds? Which existed first, valves or blood-circulation? There is in the animal world abundant circulation without valves or veins. The cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises, &c.) have no valves in their veins; and yet, I presume, their blood circulates as well as ours. Circulation goes on in a speck of protoplasm where there is no structure at all. Even in organisms, the heart may be very diverse, and yet serve the owner as well as we are served. In frogs, toads, &c., there is but one ventricle; in most fish there is but one auricle and one ventricle; in the lancelet there is but a single tube. But their blood circulates as well as ours.

Had Mr. St. Clair's deity felt any deep concern for human welfare, he would have placed, had it occurred to

him, valves in the deep *arteries*, so that the poor wretch who ruptures one of them should not bleed to death.

I grew out of Paley, Brougham, and Bell's theology years ago. What naturalist or physiologist to-day shows any respect to their crude Design argument? Besides, Mr. St. Clair has no right to refer to them; his god is not theirs—theirs was almighty and infinitely wise; his a poor puny thing for whom his single high priest is ever making apologies.

If every creature were adapted, "admirably" or not, "to the element in which it lives," it would never die. Geological strata furnish absolute proofs that no creatures, no race of creatures, were ever yet "admirably adapted to their conditions." Whole races have died out. *Will* my opponent kindly explain? Has he ever read of famines, coal-pit disasters, earthquakes? What sort of a world does he live in? Has he never passed a shambles or a cemetery? Do the creatures of his marvellously concocted god die of excessive adaptation to their environments, or what?

The fish is of just the right shape—*the solid of least resistance* fits it for its element. This looks learned and imposing. But are all inhabitants of the water of one shape? *How* is *the solid of least resistance* realized in the spermaceti whale, with its big, blunt, square-fronted head? In the hammer-head? In the "Portuguese man-of-war?" In those slow ones that fall a prey to the swift? Mr. St. Clair reminds me of that venerable lady who could not sufficiently admire the wisdom of god in making rivers run down hill and along the valleys. That, certainly, is a very strong proof of divine existence; for rivers would run the other way if there were no god, just as surely as fishes would be of divers shapes, instead of being all of one pattern as they now are, if there were not a god to make them all in his own image.

The feathers of a bird's wings are placed, I am informed, at the "best possible angle for assisting progress," etc. And cold is found in the best possible conditions for freezing the early buds and blossoms and for killing men and children exposed to it. Heat is well adapted to warming purposes. Had there been no god, heat would probably freeze things, and frost would roast, boil, or burn them. There is as much design in the one case as in the other. Mr. St. Clair may

next tell us the design in the wings of a penguin, a moa, or an apteryx.

The cabbage butterfly deposits its eggs by instinct, says my opponent. How does he know that sight or smell does not guide it? Has he consulted the insect? What *is* instinct? And what right has Mr. St. Clair's god to destroy my cabbages by the disgusting caterpillars which spring from those eggs? Gardeners kill those caterpillars by myriads every year; but the real destroyer of our gardens is Mr. St. Clair's god. Whose instinct or instigation leads the ichneumon to deposit its eggs right in the body of a caterpillar, so that its murderous brood should eat up their living host? Whose instinct guides the tapeworm to a human body? Whose instinct guides the locusts to lay waste a country and produce a famine?

My opponent says that butterflies and other objects mentioned in his second paragraph are "samples of theistic facts." So much the worse for deity and Theism, if true. I had supposed, however, that Mr. St. Clair knew the difference between Theology and Natural Science! Must I enlighten him? The eye and the circulation of the blood are anatomical and physiological facts, not Theistic; birds and fishes are subjects in zoology, and insects belong to the sub-science of entomology. Cannibalism is as much, possibly more, a Theistic fact as any yet named. Though if my opponent will claim for his god the credit of creating all noxious and destructive pests, including fleas, bugs, tapeworms, etc., I suppose an Atheist need not complain.

What my opponent says of "discerning an intelligence at work," a "worker whether infinite or not," a "purpose running through the ages," etc., is no doubt borrowed from one of his discourses; and sure I am it edified all the devout who listened to it. But discussion is not a devotional exercise exactly, and I must beg him to translate those liturgical scraps into plain language, specially that about the "purpose running through the ages." The language is good; I wonder if the purpose is. I am in a fever-heat of anxiety to hear what it is my opponent discerns, whether anyone else may get a glimpse of it—at not too great a cost. The man that can "discern a purpose running through the ages" of human history must be either very much clearer sighted or immensely

more superstitious than anyone that I know. Indeed, I must, till evidence be forthcoming, regard the boast as nothing more than a rhetorical flourish. Is Mr. St. Clair a clairvoyant, I wonder, or subject to second sight?

"Man," we are gravely told, "did not come until the earth had been prepared for him." Neither did the tapeworm, till man had been prepared for *him*. It is worthy of note, too, that pickpockets, forgers, swindlers, fortunetellers, inquisitors, aristocrats, and vermin generally "did not come till the earth had been prepared for them." And, who *would* credit it? there never was a chimney sweep till chimneys existed! In that fact "I discern" a profound "purpose" of a two-fold nature:—1st. Chimneys were intended and designed to be swept, and to this end divine Providence made coals black and sooty, else sweeps would never have had any work; 2nd. He made the sweeps in order to clear the flues of their foulness. Mr. St. Clair may close his eyes to these facts as long as he pleases; they are Theistic facts—if any such exist, and are a most remarkable proof of design and intelligence. It was just as impossible for man to antedate his necessary epoch, or to postpone it, as for sweeps to precede chimneys. Man's coming was the natural and inevitable outcome or result of all the phænomena that preceded him in his own line of development. You have no better proof that water is a natural product than that man is such. He had no intelligent creator, nor was one required. Man is a natural, not supernatural, phænomenon. His so-called creator is really his creation, a fancy, a bugbear, and nothing more. It is high time for Atheists, I think, to cease beating about the bush, and tell the Theist bluntly that his gods are figments neither useful nor ornamental, the offspring of ignorance, fear, and slavery—to-day mere grim and curious survivals of the epochs when superstition was unchecked in its growth and sway.

Mr. St. Clair at length takes refuge in inspiration and infallibility. "I am bold to say," says he, "that thousands of good people are conscious of communion with a higher soul, of inspirations received from him, and of tasks assigned by him." Here my opponent chooses for his comrades the phrenzied prophets and priestesses of ancient superstitions; the hysterical nuns who converse with Mary at Lourdes and where not; Johanna Southcott, Joseph Smith Edward

Irving, Brigham Young, Mother Girling, *et hoc genus omne*, whose name is legion, whose "inspirations" and god-given "tasks" have been "thick as autumnal leaves in Vallombrosa," and have included every absurdity and every crime known to history. What has god *not* "inspired?" What has he *not* imposed as a task? "I could a tale unfold," but space forbids.

Will my opponent name one syllable of truth or an original idea that either he or any other person ever derived from "inspiration" or in "communion" with this higher soul? Ah, me! This world is very wonderful. Socrates had a dæmon, Prospero was served by Ariel. Faust had his Mephistopheles, and Mr. St. Clair has his "higher soul," spelt with initial capitals! This higher soul of his—I may speak with some authority—is but himself, in dim, shadowy, and magnified outline, a very Brocken Spectre, projected on the soft clouds of his superstition. I once had the disease badly, but recovered long since. Do not despair, good sir; the rising sun of common-sense and healthy Atheistic thought will soon fling his powerful beams on the very spot where your magnified and ghostly shadow now sits, and the mists which form the throne of your deity will rarify and vanish along with the occupant!

But to claim inspiration is to claim infallibility. If you are sure you have communion with some one, to discuss the question of his existence, to ask if belief in it is rational, are highly improper—you have settled the matter by fact, and there is an end of it. There is no arguing with an inspired man; nor should he himself attempt reason, it is unnecessary. An inspired man should merely dogmatise—as Mr. St. Clair does. He never argues, he merely states. I understand him now; he is weak in logic, but invincible in faith. Men who hold communion with higher souls rarely argue well. The reason is obvious:—no man that can reason well and has a good case ever thinks of rushing into inspiration. Inspiration is the despair of logic; it is the refuge of those who are bankrupt of reason. Mr. St. Clair must no more grumble with the Pope and his infallibility; he claims it too, and for exactly the same reasons. Had the Pope been able to prove his other claims, he would have had no excuse for claiming infallibility and "communion with the higher souls." Just so, if Mr. St. Clair had been

able to make out even a passable, lame, blind, and limping case in this discussion, we should have heard nothing about inspiration and "consciousness" of deity. Any devout worshipper can extort just as much real inspiration from old clouts and mouldy bones as my opponent derives from his god. Of course there is no arguing with this new Moses—he is up among the crags of Sinai contemplating his god, speaking to him face to face, reflecting on his feet, or viewing other "parts" of his splendid person. I hope he will publish his inspirations when he descends.

I should not show any respect to Mr. St. Clair were I to notice some few sentences in his letter, one close to the end for example. No man not near his wit's end could permit himself deliberately to publish that about gouging out eyes, &c.

Lastly, Mr. St. Clair has written four out of his six letters, and yet no shadow of a Theistic fact. Assertions —bold enough many of them—we have had in abundance, but no sound reasoning, no evidence of a divine existence yet. Is he reserving his arguments and facts for his last letter, and does he intend to overwhelm me then without leaving me the possibility of reply? I should like to know what his god is. Has he not yet made up his mind about him?

POSTSCRIPTUM.—I have now, Friday evening, seen the conclusion of Mr. St. Clair's long letter. I understood we were to confine ourselves to two columns and a-half each letter; but here is one from my opponent of nearly five columns. If his logic were equal to the length of his epistles, I should soon be *hors de combat*, but the logic is in the inverse ratio of the cubes of the lengths, and so I have but little to do.

The first sentence of his supplement seems very much like swearing. I do not "damn eyes" or "curse teeth;" I point out their faults and thus damn their maker, if there be one. All I have done is to employ fair and honest criticism respecting the manufactures of this new deity manufactured by Mr. St. Clair. The really good things of Nature I no more ignore nor despise than my opponent; I merely show what sort of a god he has, if he has one. The excuses and apologies he makes for his most unfortunate deity sufficiently

show that Mr. St. Clair feels what I say and cannot refute my criticisms. This is all I desire of him. He cannot deny my facts, nor can he successfully defend his poor god upon one single point, except by representing him as being weak to contempt. Why contend for such a god?

Considering how much Mr. St. Clair can write without saying anything to the point, how long are his letters, how weak his arguments, how many his words, how few his facts, and how pointless even those are which he produces, it seems to me that Hunter's joke about the "Jaw" should have been reserved for his own behoof. I have nothing at all to do with the size of the jaw. If the deity made the jaw too small for its purpose, my opponent will need to make another apology for him. I beg to ask: could Mr. St. Clair's deity have made the jaw and teeth so that they could grow at an equal rate, or could he not? Could he have given every person a good set of teeth that would do their work without aching, or could he not? Does he know when producing a set of teeth that they will begin to decay almost as soon as completed? Does he intend them to do so? Does he intend them to give pain, or not? I ask the same about the eyes. Does this poor deity know when making a pair of blind eyes that they will never see? Does he intend them to see, or not? Mr. St. Clair will not answer these questions; his false position will not allow him.

He would like a dentist who could give him an aching set of teeth! I have long suspected him of joking, now I am sure of it. If two of his new teeth pinched his gum, he would return to the dentist to have them rectified. It is only when Quixotically defending his poor god that he pretends to despise pain. It seems to me very heartless to speak of "Venus and Mercury" as he does when he must know that many people, children for example, who devote themselves to neither, suffer horrible pain both in connexion with teeth and eyes—ay, every organ of the body. Is human suffering a thing to be joked with? Evidently "communion with that higher soul" whom he supposes to have made this dreadful world, has produced its natural effects and rendered my opponent callous to the sufferings around him. Of course, it is only when the spirit of the lord is upon him and he rises in wrath to do battle for his deity that he feels no sympathy for human pain. It was

converse with fancied deities that led to all the atrocities of the middle ages. Once believe in a god that inflicts pain, that makes people deformed, sickly, that afflicts them with all the horrible diseases that flesh is heir to, and you make light of all pain but your own, out of sympathy for your god and in acquiescence with his supposed intentions. This, I fear, is my opponent's condition. During this discussion he has persevered in ignoring suffering, and has spoken of all evils as if they were flea-bites. It is, I am sure, his irrational Theism that makes him do so.

The egg is descanted upon by my opponent. Well, did it never occur to him that, here, as in every other case he can mention, the creator, if such there be, must have made the *necessity* for his design and adaptation before meeting that necessity by contrivances? Young are produced in a great variety of ways. Was it necessary that eggs should be laid and then brooded over for weeks by the bird? If so, whence came that necessity? And does the deity know when he is so carefully constructing an egg that it will never be laid? that fowl and egg will both die and rot together? Or does he know that Mr. St. Clair will eat it for breakfast? What a silly deity to manufacture such countless millions of eggs, eggs of fishes, and eggs of fowls, for the purpose of developing them into animals, when he knows all the while that only a very few of them can possibly reach their destination! If he does *not* know their destiny, he must be equally contemptible.

Mr. St. Clair tries to establish a distinction between a mere fitness to produce a result, and purposive fitness which intends to secure the result. This is a bold flight. He won't be "pinned to definitions," but he will assume ability to distinguish between accidents and purposed events in Nature. I presume his "communion with the higher soul" must have been exceedingly close to authorise him to speak thus. Is he the grand vizier of his deity, or who? Does he suppose his god would overdo his adaptation? The destructive forces and processes of nature are just as much organised and arranged for the set purpose of destroying as anything that can be named. To the point: Does Mr. St. Clair argue or hold that all pain is accidental? That death is not intended, not designed? Will he venture to give a direct answer to these questions? Are the teeth

of cats, tigers, lions, etc., less evidently adapted to their work of killing than the egg for its supposed intention? Is an earthquake less adapted to the destruction of life than warmth and eggs are to produce or extend it? Is a famine less adapted to destroy than a harvest to sustain? Is the Spring more fit to produce blossoms than the frost is to nip them?

No; a malignant deity would *not* at once destroy everything, for two reasons: 1st. He might be too weak, as Mr. St. Clair's is; 2nd. He would lose most of his horrible pleasure. Malignancy would do just what my opponent's god is doing, raise up generation after generation, as long as he is able, for the gratification of torturing and destroying them. No doubt, if Theism be *at all rational*, Dualism is the only logical form it can take. I am neither Monotheist nor Duotheist: the whole belief appears to me so irrational and absurd that I cannot think that civilised men of to-day would be swayed by it, were their minds not perverted in that direction in early life.

Indeed, it vastly surprises me to find a partial sceptic, like my opponent, resuscitating the Design Argument, which the "Bridgewater Treatises" so long ago elaborated to death. I wish he would say a word or two on the tape-worm, the trichina, and other pests. It is so delightfully amusing to me to hear a Theist expatiating on the goodness of deity as displayed in the evils of life! "Evil and decay do not carry purpose on the face of them, while organised adaptations do." Indeed! What would become of all new organisms if the old were not cleared off by decay and death? Beasts, birds, and fishes of prey, are not then organised to destroy? The wings of the hawk, the legs of the tiger, the shape and tail of the dolphin were not organised to enable them to destroy their prey? The smut, a fungus that destroys wheat, the dry rot, barnacles that eat ships to destruction, locusts, caterpillars, phylloxera, the *empusa muscæ*, a fungus that kills flies, the *botrytis bassiana*, a fungus which attacks the silkworms, and reduced the annual production of cocoons in France between the years 1853 and 1865 from 65,000,000 to 10,000,000; the potato disease, which caused such suffering and misery in Ireland—these fungi are not organised, Mr. St. Clair, by implication, affirms! What will not Theism lead a man to say?

He quotes Professor Owen—Does he not know that Owen and other great Naturalists can tell by the examination of a tooth whether an unknown animal was a carnivore or a vegetarian, etc.? Were the teeth, muscles, viscera, etc., of a carnivore "purposively" adapted for killing, tearing, and digesting other animals, or not? Yes, or no? pray.

My opponent must try again—I wish to encourage him. He has not yet laid the first stone of rational Theism. No Theistic fact has he given us yet, no argument or criticism of mine has he upset so far. I don't blame him. He has undertaken an impossible work. All material, all force, all arrangements (except those of art), all causes, all effects, all processes, are natural; the *super*natural is but a dream.

LETTER X.

From MR. G. ST. CLAIR *to* MR. J. SYMES.

MR. SYMES, in his postscript, again tilts at somebody who believes in the supernatural. When I spoke of conscious communion with a Higher Soul, and inspirations received from Him, I knew I was saying something the seeming refutation of which was easy; so I prefaced it with—"I am bold to say." No doubt all sorts of fanatics have claimed inspiration. But I do not contend for the divineness of phrensies, nor argue for the special inspiration of the Hebrew prophets. I hold reasonably that all new light of knowledge and all new impulse to duty is inspiration. Tracing effects back to causes, I come at last to One Divine Fount. To Him I ascribe all life, all faculty in man, all insight into truth, and all the development, improvement and refinement which are synonymous with progressive civilisation. So, when I am requested to name one syllable of truth or a single original idea derived from inspiration, I name *all*, for there is not one which has had any other ultimate source. I may be referred to secondary or proximate sources, but that would be like referring me to the printer's types and the compositor's muscular exertions as an explanation of Tennyson's poem on "Despair" in the November number of the *Nineteenth Century*. I am told that the Higher Soul of which I speak is but myself projected in magnified form

on a cloud, and there is just that modicum of truth in assertions of this sort which serves to lead some persons into Atheism. Mr. Symes need not address me as though I were ignorant of all that has been urged in the way of proving that "man makes God in his own image." I believe man has often done so, and I employ myself sometimes in destroying such images. But just as there is true astronomy, notwithstanding early and still-lingering superstitions of astrology, so there is a true theology. I have shown that there are evidences of *purpose* in nature—proofs of a Mind at work—and there is a mind in man which reads and understands the realised thoughts in nature and the designs in progress. Hence it is true to say there is a God, and that man, intellectually, is made after his likeness.

The closing paragraph of the postscript shows again how Mr. Symes mistakes the issue. He says: "All material, all force, all arrangements (except those of art), all causes, all effects, all processes, are natural; the *super*natural is but a dream." Is this supposed to be good against me? I might almost claim it as my own. My opponent denies the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. So do I, unless you define "supernatural" to be the action of MIND, whether human or divine. He maintains a distinction between the natural and the artificial. So do I. I perceive for myself, and I point out to him, that all "arrangements" made by man, and therefore called artificial, are effected by the use of "material" and "forces" and "causes"; so that to judge whether they be artificial or not we have to look for evidences of mind, purpose, design. Then I point out that, judged in this way, the human eye is an artificial production; yet not a production of man's art, and therefore must be the work of some other Artificer. For similar reasons, I am forced to the same conclusion regarding many other things, and in a general way regarding the evolution of the human race and the progress of the world,

> "I see in part
> That all, as in some piece of art,
> Is toil co-operant to an end."

I don't call these works supernatural; but seeing that they are superhuman I reckon them as divine art. But Mr. Symes, because it is possible to distinguish between divine art and human, denies all resemblance; as though that

followed! In his first paragraph, flippant and foolish, because he does not find the human frame classed with orders of architecture, he objects to my saying it has been built up. He ought to have read a little book called "The House I live in"—a work on the human body. But he would like, if he could, to laugh my legitimate analogies out of court.

Paley, Brougham, and Bell—my God is not theirs. If he means that my theology is not quite the same as theirs, I assent, for I take into account Evolution, which they, in their day, could not do. The arguments of Paley only want restating in terms of the Evolution theory. The machinery, and arrangements, and adaptations which Paley ascribed to the Creator, some Atheists now ascribe to Evolution, as though Evolution were an intelligent creative entity. Mr. Symes has been slow in launching this boomerang, probably being little familiar with it, or knowing it to be ineffective against Theism as I defend Theism; but now, for lack of better missiles he hurls it, though timidly, as one who fears it will come back upon himself. He disputes my argument that the valves in the blood vessels are intended to secure the circulation of the blood, on the ground that a river makes its own channel. A few zoological facts are adduced to support the inference, I imagine, that the blood has constructed the blood-vessels and given them a gradually increasing complication as we advance from protoplasm through animals of low organisation, up to man. This is an argument from Evolution.

So there is a gradual advance, is there? with increasing complication in the apparatus, and with the noble frame of man as the result, and yet no design in any of it! Topsy 'spects it comes of itself! natural causes account for it! Topsy does not comprehend that in divine art, as well as in human, what is designed by the mind has to be accomplished by the aid of "natural" instruments. All that the eye can see is the instrument and the process; for the existence of the originating mind has to be mentally inferred, the guiding and governing spirit is only spiritually discerned.

Alphonso suggests an improvement in the circulating apparatus; he would "place valves in the deep arteries, so that the poor wretch who ruptures one of them should not

bleed to death." It seems that valves in the blood-vessels might be placed there *for a purpose* if Alphonso were taken into counsel! Now there *are* valves in the arteries, which allow the blood to flow out from the heart, through the system, and prevent its regurgitating. If this is the very thing which Alphonso considers a wise arrangement, why does he object to it when *I* call it wise? Or would he make them to open the reverse way? Then certainly the heart's blood would not pour through an accidental rupture, but neither would it flow through the system at all, and therefore we could not live. The arrangement suggested for the arteries is that which does prevail in the *veins;* and therefore there is much less danger from a ruptured vein than from a ruptured artery. But how could you have circulation, if both sets of valves were adapted for sending blood to the heart, and neither set would allow it to come away? Alphonso here shows himself very wise indeed. He is again asking for contradictory arrangements; he again fails to see that the Creator is working under conditions.

Mr. Symes, who has not a syllable to say in the way of proving his Atheism to be rational, can only find material for his letters by drawing out his opponent—"Could God make jaws and teeth in a certain way?" "What is instinct?" "Will I make plainer the purpose running through the ages?" etc. Though aware of the trick, I will say as much as my space allows, about Evolution. Briefly, Evolution explains the introduction of new species on to this planet, in the following way. Taking some already-existing species, the offspring inherit the parental likeness with variations; afterwards, in their individual life, they may undergo modifications, which in turn they transmit to their offspring. The particular varieties best suited to external conditions, survive, and leave offspring equally well suited, or even better suited. Variation upon variation, in successive generations, causes the difference from the original to become great, and the creatures are then classed as a distinct species. In this way one species is born from another, as truly as an individual is born of its parents. This inheritance with modifications, is creation by birth. If external conditions change, the modification takes a direction which adapts the creature to them. If the creature changes its habits, or migrates and comes under new

conditions, the modification takes the form of increased growth in the organs and parts now especially called into use, and diminished growth of the parts disused. It is no poser for Mr. Symes to ask me the design of the wings of the penguin, the moa and the apteryx: their wings have become reduced to remnants too small to fly with, because they changed their habits, because they found a paradise and preferred not to fly away from it. The wings of their progenitors served their purpose well; inheritance reproduced them as long as they were wanted; and when new conditions or changed habits demanded the greater growth of other organs, the forces of development were turned in that direction. Could any self-acting arrangement be more beautiful? This is creation from age to age. This is part of the method by which the purpose of the ages is being effected. I am not contending for the supernatural instantaneous creation of elephants with tusks full grown, but for creation by natural means; and here we see it going on. Does Mr. Symes know anything at all about Evolution? Has he even read Darwin and Herbert Spencer? His notion of creation seems to exclude evolution, and his notion of evolution to exclude creation: but there are two things he cannot do: (1) explain any possible process of creation without evolution, (2) explain how Evolution got itself into gear without a Creator—I mean into such gear as we find, when its machinery produces organised creatures of higher and higher sort, culminating in man; yes, in man, with his marvellous frame and flesh, blood and brain, reason and conscience, heart and hopes.

God created man; that is to say, the human race has been born in fulfilment of the divine purpose. The individual, tracing his parentage backwards, must pass beyond "Adam" to some creature who was the common progenitor of men and apes. Of course, man could no more antedate his necessary epoch and come before his time than sweeps could precede chimneys, to use Mr. Symes's sooty illustration. I will grant Mr. Symes *that;* I will grant him that man could not be born before his parents. With equal readiness I assent to the proposition that, just as with the individual infant, the human race was the necessary result of the phænomena which preceded it in its own line of development. That is to say, man is a product of natural

causes, "a natural and not a supernatural phænomenon." But if this is supposed to exclude a creative Mind, which designed and fashioned man, I need only ask whether the statue of Priestley, in Mr. Symes's town of Birmingham, is not at once the production of the sculptor's design and the inevitable result of particular movements of chisels upon a block of marble. There is no human production except by the agency of natural causes; there are no marks of intention stamped upon such productions without a mind to give them origin and authorship.

Mr. Symes, because I twitted him for crying so much about his toothache, wrongfully represents me as being callous to human sufferings. I think, if he had studied Evolution, he would hardly speak of "a God that inflicts pain and afflicts people with all the horrible diseases that flesh is heir to." He wishes to know, "Do I hold that all pain is accidental? and will I venture to give a direct answer?" Of course I will. As I understand this discussion, Mr. Symes does hold that all pain is accidental. Topsy 'spects that all pain comes of its own self. I, for my part, have no hesitation in saying that the capacity to suffer pain is deliberately designed, is manifestly for the good of the individual, and a necessary factor in the evolution of the higher animals. It may seem a paradox to say that pain, when it occurs, is a good thing, and yet that it should be removed as quickly as possible. Nevertheless I say it, and can show it to be true. If you rest your hand on a heated iron plate, it will disorganise the flesh. That is undesirable, because it deprives you of a handy servant. The pain which tells you that you are running this risk is no evil, but a sentinel's warning, a red-light danger signal, a telegraphic intimation to use caution. We should be badly off without the capacity for pain, while we should be wanting in sense not to try and get rid of it by removing its cause. Returning to "the purpose running through the ages," it will be found that the animals with the most highly developed nervous system and greatest capacity for pain have become the higher animals in other respects, and are classed high by the naturalist. Sensibility to pain has saved their progenitors from many dangers, has given them an advantage in the "struggle for existence," and has promoted their upward evolution in proportion to its acuteness.

Mr. Symes, who, two or three letters back, thought life not worth living, has a great objection to death. I thought so, because when I showed that he ought logically to commit suicide it was not agreeable to him. When he passes a cemetery, or reflects that whole races of creatures have died out, he is much concerned, and marvels that *I* can retain my Theism. As with pain, so with death, he demands to know, "Do I hold that death is not intended or designed?"—and how about beasts of prey—"Yes or no, pray"? This peremptory attitude, when used on a platform, might cow a timid man, and at all events helps to produce an impression that he is shirking a difficulty. To shirk difficulties is not *my* custom. But when Mr. Symes adduces the earthquake as apparently designed to destroy men, I cannot accept the instance, because I cannot see that earthquakes are purposely adapted to rock down cities. Having some idea of geological facts, I believe that earthquakes were before cities in the order of time, and men in their ignorance have built their cities on the earthquake lines. But the tiger's claws and fangs I accept as being plainly designed to fit the animal for catching and tearing prey. I have before asserted—and my opponent cannot disprove it—that every organ is for the good of its possessor. If any exceptions can be brought forward, I will show that they literally prove the rule. The tiger's organs are for the tiger's advantage; so far there is design, and even beneficence. It is equally true, of course, that the tiger's claws are a disadvantage to the tiger's prey—to the individuals which fall victims. This has been a great difficulty to the minds of many good people who have not ransacked nature to find atheistic arguments. I have only space to say that the weeding-out of inferior and ill-adapted animals, with the survival of the fittest, who leave offspring "fit" as themselves, is a necessary part of the machinery for the evolution of the higher animals. Without this arrangement there never would have been a race of mankind. It ill becomes us to quarrel with the process which gave us birth. The death of those weak individuals is for the good of the species, and the entire arrangement adds to the sum of animal enjoyment. Death, in the form in which it comes to the lower animals, is generally unexpected and seldom painful; death, as it comes to man, is no evil if it be the

portal to higher life. But Atheists, of course, are without hope. The moral difficulties of the "struggle for life" are dealt with in a volume which may be seen in the British Museum and in the Birmingham Free Library—a volume called "Darwinism and Design," written by George St. Clair.

LETTER XI.

From MR. J. SYMES *to* MR. G. ST. CLAIR.

MR. ST. CLAIR entered upon this discussion with the ostensible object of showing that Theism is rational and more rational than Atheism. But either he has never seriously engaged in the work or else has wofully failed in spite of honest and earnest effort. What a *theos*, *deus*, or god is has yet to be learned—my opponent has no settled opinions upon the subject. If he has, why does he not straightforwardly state the proposition he intends to maintain, and then allege only such facts and employ only such reasoning as may tend to establish his theory?

His Theism has evidently never been thought out; he has adopted it as he adopted the fashion of his coat, and has never investigated the one or the other critically. If he has investigated his Theism and really does understand its nature, ramifications, and bearings, he most scrupulously keeps it all secret, as Herodotus did much of what he was told about the gods in Egypt—the most secret mysteries he refused, from the most pious motives, to reveal. This is to be regretted, especially as my opponent has so much to reveal, if he could be induced to do it, being imbued with plenary inspiration. Though, like most modest men, now that I ask him to let us know what his god has told him, I find his bashfulness so overpowers him that he cannot summon up sufficient courage to give the world a single syllable of what he heard or saw on Horeb or in the third heaven. It is a pity the deity did not select a more appropriate prophet; but the ways of divine providence are notoriously odd, capricious, uncertain, contradictory, and insane.

Mr. St. Clair asks if I know anything of evolution. No

doubt that is intended to be a tit for some tat of mine. I may say that I understand Darwin and the rest of the evolutionists sufficiently to know that evolution is purely Atheistic, that nature is all-sufficient for all her operations; that no god is wanted, needed, or desirable for any of her processes. I am obliged to Mr. St. Clair for calling attention to his own book on the subject, though for the purposes of this discussion it was unnecessary; and, if Mr. St. Clair does not understand Darwin far better than he does his poor deity, the book cannot be worth reading. A man who can write five long letters on Theism without naming one Theistic fact, or attempting a logical or rational argument in support of his position—five letters full of irrelevancies, side-issues, platitudes, uncertainties apologies for deity, misrepresentation of natural facts, pompous boasts of divine inspiration, and ability to "discern the purpose" of god "running through the ages," and the distinction between accidents and "purposive" events in nature—whatever knowledge such a man may have, his temper and disposition, his total want of ballast and critical acumen must unfit him entirely for writing a work on evolution or any other philosophical subject.

If nature operates her own changes, evolution is a beautiful theory; but admit a god who works by means of evolution, and the whole aspect of the subject is changed; evolution becomes the most perfect system of red-tapism that can be conceived. If evolution results in good, all that good was as much *needed* millions of years back as now; but red-tape decided that whole generations must perish, that evils and abuses could not be removed, except by an interminable and bewildering and murderous process, complex beyond expression or thought—whereas an honest and able god would have done the work out of hand and shown as much respect for the first of his children as for later ones. But Mr. St. Clair's murders generation after generation of his family for the sake of working out some change, the evolution of a new organ, the gradual atrophy or decay of old ones, the rise of a new species or the destruction of aboriginal races.

I shall not further follow up Mr. St. Clair's remarks. They are not to the point, even approximately. He confounds language and mingles art and nature, and thus

bewilders his unwary reader instead of informing him. Long since I should have ignored what my opponent says, only my action would have been misunderstood. To prove Theism rational one must prove that there is a god. This has not been done. Then you must connect god and nature. This has not been done; in fact, Mr. St. Clair is reduced to the necessity of admitting that his god is weak and even a part of nature—a big, stupid giant, most probably living in that region to which the celebrated Jack climbed up by a bean-stalk.

Here follow some positive evidences that there is no god existing, except the mere idols and fictions of worshippers, etc.—

1. No trace of one has been observed, no footstep, coprolite, or what not. The only life of which mankind has any knowledge is animal life and vegetable life; and it is inconceivable that there should be any other.

2. The world was never *made*, nor any natural product in it; and therefore a maker is impossible.

3. The universe, so far as it is known, is not conducted or governed, nor is any department of it, except those departments under the influence of living beings. Nature's processes consist in the interaction, attraction, repulsion, union and disunion of its parts and forces, and of nothing else.

4. All known substances and materials have definite and unalterable quantities and attributes or qualities. Their only changes are approximation, recession, combination, and disunion; and all the phænomena of nature are the sole results of these, one class of phænomena being no more accidental or designed than another. Design is nowhere found beyond the regions of animal action, and animal action is nothing more nor anything less than the outcome or the result, however complex, of the total forces and materials which alternately combine and segregate in all animals. An animal is what he is by virtue of his antecedents, his physical combinations and disunions, and his environments.

All known facts lead logically to the above conclusions, and it is naught but superstition or irrational belief that assumes or predicates the contrary. Nor is any honest result ever gained by assuming the existence of a god: it explains

nothing, it leads to nothing but confusion. More than that, it is an attempt to explain nature's mystery by creating a still greater mystery, which is unphilosophical. Further still, it is an attempt to expound nature by (1) that which is not nature, or (2) by a natural phænomenon or set of phænomena; for your god must be either natural, supernatural, or artificial. Mr. St. Clair's is not supernatural, but natural. Very well; if it be natural, as he says, it is an unknown phænomenon, or substance, or force; and therefore cannot be utilised in any way by reason. A false philosophy or imposture may appeal to the unknown to explain difficulties; the whole round of religion consists of nothing else than examples of it. But true philosophy never attempts to explain the known by the unknown.

5. Mr. St. Clair believes in evolution, and yet holds the dogma of a former *creation*. That is to play fast and loose with reason; for why do you ascribe *any* power to physical causes, if you refuse to regard them as sufficiently powerful to *originate*, as well as to develope the phænomena of Nature? Mr. St. Clair ascribes all the evils of life to second causes, all its goods to deity. That is good Theology, but the worst Philosophy. If life is physically sustained, developed, and modified, it must be physically originated. The only logical conclusion to be drawn from Theistic premisses is that each event, each phænomenon, each change is the work of a separate god, or fairy, or devil—beings of whom nothing is known beyond the fact that everyone of them was created by man for the express purpose of creating and governing the world or parts of it. But the philosopher will never think of using them in any way till their real existence and action have been placed beyond a doubt.

6. If the world was really *made*, it was not intelligently made, for it is chiefly a scene of confusion, strife, folly, insanity, madness, brutality, and death. No intelligent creator could endure the sight of it after making it:—he would put his foot on it and crush it, or else commit suicide in disgust. In geology the world is but a heap of ruins; in astronomy an unfortunate planet, so placed as regards the sun that one part roasts while another freezes.

7. Men talk of the wisdom and goodness seen in God's creation! He made man, and left him naked and houseless, ignorant of nearly all he needed to know, a mere brute. He

showed neither goodness nor wisdom here. It is only by a painful process "running through the ages," a process of blood, murder, starvation, and the death of millions upon millions that our civilisation has been achieved; and what is it even now? A civilisation of fraud, brutality slightly veiled, hypocrisy wholesale, superstitions the most costly and profound, a civilisation that houses the dead better than the living, that pauperises survivors to bestow costly tombs upon the dead, that builds splendid temples for gods and priests to sport in, and leaves men and women to rot physically, mentally and morally, in dens!

8. But this god never interferes for human good. This governor of men never governs. He might prevent all crime; he prevents none. What is the use of a god who could not or would not prevent the murder of Lincoln, Garfield, and thousands of others? If he could, and was by, he is an accessory or worse; if he couldn't, he has in man a creature he cannot control, and is therefore contemptible.

9. I am aware that some Theists urge that god could not interfere, as I suggest, without violating man's free-agency. Whether Mr. St. Clair holds that opinion I cannot just now say; but all along I have aimed at a much wider Theism than that of Mr. St. Clair, and shall therefore make a remark or two on this subject.

(1.) All government interferes with free-agency. And no one complains that a government should try to prevent crime. Indeed, that is one of its main functions. And a government that does not, to its utmost knowledge and power, prevent crime, is a bad government. Well, the so-called divine government prevents none; what is its use? Not to prevent crime is to encourage its commission. This the divine government does.

(2) The free-agency plea is silly. Every murderer, every tyrant destroys the free-agency of his victim. Does god respect the free-agency of the victim less than that of the villain? Does he scrupulously refrain from checking the latter while he inflicts wrong and death upon the former? Human laws are professedly (many of them really) framed to protect the innocent and weak, and to restrain the strong and vicious; divine laws must have a contrary intention, if the free-agency plea is correct.

Finally. I am well aware that my style of treating this

subject must be very offensive to some. But I make no apology for it. I adopt it deliberately and of set purpose. I regard Theism as immensely stupid, so much so that serious argument is wasted upon it, just as it would be waste labor to try to disprove transubstantiation or to show that Laputa could not fly as Gulliver describes. Uncompromising ridicule seems to me the best weapon wherewith to attack this miserable fetishism of my opponent. I have used it unsparingly and heartily, and hope my opponent has enjoyed the discussion as much as I have.

I close without a spark of ill-will towards Mr. St. Clair, and beg to express the opinion that his failure is not due to any intellectual defect in him, but to the utterly impossible proposition he undertook to defend. It is no disgrace to fail where success is impossible. Nor do I claim any credit to myself—Atheism is so easy to defend that I must have been totally excuseless to have failed in it.

LETTER XII.

From MR. G. ST. CLAIR *to* MR. J. SYMES.

MR. SYMES goes off the platform with a laugh, and tells the audience he has won a victory; but he must be conscious all the time that he has not dislodged his antagonist from his entrenchments. I have been disappointed in my opponent. His first letter confirmed the assurance which he had given to me privately—that this discusssion should be "definite, earnest, real"—but his last contains the confession that he has deliberately adopted an offensive style and dealt in uncompromising ridicule, because he considers that serious argument would be wasted upon so stupid a subject as Theism.

All through this discussion I have only used half the notes made on a first reading of Mr. Symes's letters, and now, in order to find room for a general summing up, I must withhold the detailed reply which I could give to his last. It is annoying to have to leave so many fallacies unanswered; but I think I have replied to most statements which could claim to be arguments, as far as my space allowed.

Mr. Symes opened the discussion, and ought to have advanced some reasons for considering Atheism rational; but he confessed at once that he had nothing positive to urge in favor of his negative, but should confine himself to picking holes in Theistic arguments. His letters have abounded with peremptory questions, and every answer I have given has afforded material to tear to pieces or snarl at. My opponent began by asking eight questions, six of which involved a discussion of the infinite, the infinite being easy to juggle with. The definition of God which he preferred was the vulgar definition, which involves a contradiction, and would therefore have given him an opportunity of dialectical victory. He wished me to say that God is a Being infinite in power and infinite in goodness, and he wanted the former part of this definition to mean that the power of Deity is adequate to accomplish things which are in their very nature impossible. Then he would have argued that infinite goodness would desire to free the world at once from all evil, pain and inconvenience; that infinite power could accomplish this; but that it is not done, and therefore no God exists. I refused to define Deity in the way dictated to me, but it was all the same to my opponent—his arguments were only good against the vulgar definition, and so he attacked that. He set forth at large that there was a good deal of pain and trouble in the world, which, to his mind, must be inconsistent with the existence of an infinite God. Of course, it is not really so unless, besides possessing infinite goodness of nature, the Creator possesses unlimited power, and that in a mathematical sense. Now, I have shown that the Creator cannot possess unlimited power in this sense, and therefore my opponent's objection to God's existence on the ground that "evils" exist is not conclusive.

The analogy of human labor employed in building a cathedral shows us that a fine pile may be completed *in the course of time*. It leads us to compare past phases of the world with the present, that we may discover the movement and tendency of things, for

"We doubt not, through the ages one increasing purpose runs."

We go as deep down into the past as Evolution will enable us to do, and, beginning at the lowliest forms of life, we find a gradually ascending series. At length we come to

man, who, even as a savage, is superior to all that went before. But the savage, as Gerald Massey says in his "Tale of Eternity," is only the rough-cast clay model of the perfect statue. The savage advances into the condition of a barbarian, and the barbarian, in time, becomes civilised. But God has not yet finished the work of creating man into his own image. It is astonishing that any student of Evolution, possessing two eyes, should go to the quarry and fetch out fossils for the purpose of showing that creatures have suffered and died, and should fail to get any glimpse of "a purpose running through the ages." But this is the case with my opponent, to whose eye Evolution "is purely atheistic." He also fails to see that, on this rational view of creation, evils may be only temporary; nay, more, that they are certainly diminishing, and tend to vanish altogether. I have invited my opponent three times over to find any flaw in the reasoning of Herbert Spencer, where he maintains that evil is evanescent; but it would have suited him better if he could have quoted Spencer in a contrary sense.

The Creator's power is exerted under conditions and limitations arising out of the mathematical relations of space and time. It is, therefore, not "infinite" in the vulgar sense. The vulgar definition of God wants mending; and this is about all that Mr. Symes has been able to show. As I, for my part, never put forth the vulgar definition, he ought not to have given us a panorama of the evils of the world, much less have made it revolve *ad nauseam*. The rational Theism which I hold is not overturned by the temporary occurrence of evil. But, when Mr. Symes found this out, he took to ridiculing my God as a being who is less than infinite in the vulgar sense, and professed to find the orthodox God immensely superior.

Besides exposing the fallacy of the chief objections brought against the existence of a Divine Being, I have advanced positive proofs, from the marks of design in his works. I lay stress on the fact that organs such as the eye, and organisms such as the body, are instruments and machines comparable to those designed and made by man, and which never come into existence except when contrived by intelligence. We never see the human mind going through the process of designing. We never see the mind at all. We have to look for marks of design in the work.

It is the same with regard to the Divine Spirit. Objection is made to Design, on the ground that Evolution explains all things without a Creator; but I have shown that this is not the case. Mr. Symes has hunted up all the blind eyes he can find, and the perverted instincts, which do not effect their asserted purpose, and is daring enough to say that eyes are not made to see with. The difficulty is fully explained by what I have said of the analogy between divine and human work, performed under conditions, and with concomitants of evil. I have challenged our clever Alphonso to show us a pair of those superior eyes which he says he could make, but he does not do so. He had only made an empty boast.

Connected with Design is Adaptation. Mr. Symes is irrational enough to say that if anything is designed all things are designed, and if Adaptation is seen in anything it is seen in all things. He sees it as much in the accidental smashing of an egg as in the wonderful formation of the egg to be the ark of safety for an embryo chick. This astounding nonsense is forced upon him by his Atheism, and must be charged to the irrational theory rather than to the man. But in seeking to bolster it up, Mr. Symes made use of one argument which might seem to possess force unless I exposed its weakness, and I had no space to do that in reply to his fourth letter. He said that if there be design anywhere it must be in the elements of matter especially, where I do not seem to see it, as I bring forward organised structures, living things. He says all matter is probably alive—"probably!" An instance of modesty in Mr. Symes, though immediately afterwards he becomes positive again, and says "I affirm." He affirms something about invisible atoms, namely, that there is adaptation between the atoms, and "an equilibrium stable, perfect, time-defying," far superior to the unstable adaptation of living creatures to their surroundings. My reply must be brief. An atom is that which has no parts. It cannot therefore have any organs, nor be an organism, nor possess life. Out of atoms, as out of bricks, larger things are built up, and in some of them I discern a certain architecture which speaks of Design. Whether the bricks themselves are a manufactured article does not affect my conclusion. The "adaptation between the atoms" which Mr. Symes discerns and affirms cannot be

in their interiors, for they are without parts. If he means an adaptation of atom to atom, as in the chemistry of water, I need not deny it, though two or three bricks in combination don't impress me like the cathedral of the human body; and as to the "perfect, time-defying equilibrium" of the atoms of oxygen and hydrogen which form water, electricity will unsettle it at once.

Has Mr. Symes proved Atheism to be rational? He began by declaring that "Atheism requires no direct evidence," which I must interpret to mean it has none to offer. What he now pretends to offer in his last comes late, and is not good. Has he disproved the rationality of Theism? No, not as I present Theism to him. He said, very early, that he "must decline to narrow the ground" to Theism as I present it, and, accordingly, what he has chiefly attacked has been the vulgar definition of Theism. Now the dictionary definition may go as far as I am concerned, but God remains.

If there are some difficulties on the theory of Theism, they are only increased when we fly to Atheism. Atheism accounts for nothing. Pain and misery, which are so much complained of, are just as much facts whether there be a God or no. Atheism does nothing to explain them, to release us from them, to help us to bear them. An enlightened Theism shows that sensibility to pain is a gracious provision, warning us in time to escape greater evils and contributing to our upward evolution. Evil is accounted for as "good in the making" or the necessary accompaniment of greater good, or the temporary inconvenience lying in the path to some glorious goal. Whatever is, is the best possible at the present stage, if only all the relations of things were known to us. Death enters into the great scheme, for, by the removal of the aged, room is made for younger life, and the total amount of enjoyment is increased. At the same time, this is no hardship to those who pass away, for the life of the individual soul is continued hereafter and carried higher. This belief brightens the whole of life and gives a very different aspect to pain and trouble and death, which might fairly cause perplexity if death were the final end.

The one advantage I derive from Mr. Symes's letters is that they seem to show me how men become Atheists. There are certain questions which cannot be answered, and

they are always asking those questions. There are certain difficulties of belief, and these they cherish in preference to the stronger reasons for faith and hope. There is sunshine and shadow in the world, and they prefer to dwell in the gloom. They search out all the crudities and failures, stinks and sores, diseases and evils which the world affords, or ever has afforded, and look at them through a magnifying glass. Impressed with the magnitude of the loathsome heap, and oblivious of everything else in creation, they presume to think they could have advised something better if the Creator had only consulted them. Had there been a wise Creator he surely would have done so! Henceforth they shriek out that there is no God; and nevertheless, illogical as they always are, they whimper at pain instead of bearing it, and complain of evils as though therewere some God who was inflicting them. They complain that life is not worth living, and yet speak of death as though it were maliciously designed and the greatest evil of all. They have got into a world which is "a fatherless Hell," "all massacre, murder and wrong," and ought logically to commit suicide, like the couple of Secularists in Mr. Tennyson's "Despair." But, alas! not even death will land them in any better place. They are

> "Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls
> —and to die with the brute!"

Yet that couple cherished love for one another and pity for all that breathe, and ought to have inferred thence that unless a stream can rise higher than its source, there must be much more pity and love in the Great Fount and Heart of All Things.

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